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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[QUEENIE WAS STANDING STILL WHILE AUSTIN PLACED A RING ON HER FINGER.]

KENNETH'S CHOICE.

CHAPTER V.

BRUCE CAREW, Mrs. Ainslie's only and much-beloved brother, was, in his way, a celebrity, and one of the most popular men about town. He was occupying Oakley Cottage, not because poverty denied him a house of his own, or his sister wished to do him a good turn, but simply because the Ainslies, scared by the repeated robberies in the neighbourhood, had not liked to leave their cherished home either shut up or in the charge of a caretaker. The faithful couple who usually ruled at Oakley Cottage in its owner's absence had retired to the country.

Martha Prim, although the most trustworthy of parlourmaids, absolutely refused to accept the sole responsibility, and so Bruce Carew, in his good nature, came to the rescue.

"I don't suppose I shall have to confront any burglars, Marian; but I dare say my presence will reassure Martha; and as I am

going to have some alterations made at the Snuggery, it will suit me famously to hang up my hat at Oakley Cottage."

Marion thanked him enthusiastically, but was not a little curious about the alterations.

"I thought the Snuggery suited you so exactly? Bruce, surely you are not going to marry?"

"At the ripe age of fifty-five I think you may trust me to remain a bachelor, Marian. I am getting an old man, my dear!"

"I wish you would marry, Bruce; you would be ever so much happier."

"I doubt it."

"Why should you waste your life in cherishing a mere memory? There would be heaps of girls proud to be your choice!"

"Only I am not going to choose any; and as to wasting my life, Marian, I have my art, and that, with the memory you condemn, suffices me."

For Bruce Carew was an artist, and at the head of his profession. Year after year his pictures hung on the walls of the Royal Academy. Year after year he seemed to excel

himself. He was popular in all society he entered; almost idolized by both Ainslies, who never found any fault with him, save his objection to enter the married state. He had never even been engaged, but there was a vague rumour that once he had loved, unfortunately, but that was years and years ago, as Marion Ainslie said, and he never even got so far as a proposal; therefore she could not see why he should waste his life on a mere memory.

No one else would have called it wasted. Bruce Carew did more good by his wealth and influence than many men who spend their whole time in preaching. Many a lonely one had he comforted; many a sorrow had he soothed, but he never boasted of his good deeds, and people mostly would have described him as "a first-rate fellow, but rather eccentric."

He came home after a long morning's painting about half-past three, and was going into the study to read the paper, when Martha Prim interfered with his plans.

"I thought you wouldn't mind, sir. There's a young lady in there, a friend of the mistress,

she had come a long way to see Mrs. Ainslie, so I asked her to rest a little."

"Quite right, Martha; but I thought, with my sister's love of letter-writing, all the world knew she was in Italy. What is the young lady's name?"

"I never asked her, sir."

"I suppose you gave her my sister's address?"

"No, sir; I never can remember those strange-sounding Italian names."

"I had better take it to her," said Carew, thoughtfully. "Her coming so unexpectedly looks almost as if her business was important."

"I think it is, sir; she seemed terribly disappointed at not seeing the mistress."

Bruce Carew took out his pencil, and wrote his sister's address on a page in his pocket-book. Tearing out the leaf, he was about to give it to Martha, when he changed his mind, and determined to see the unexpected visitor himself.

He opened the door and passed in; then he paused, as one stricken with a sudden blow. It was not the perfect grace of the picture before him, but the memories it recalled which agitated him. On his sister's crimson velvet couch reposed a young girl, plainly dressed in black, but with the golden brown hair and wild rose bloom which Carew had never been able to forget! She was fast asleep. Her breath came regularly as a child's; a faint smile flickered on her lips, as though her last waking thoughts had been happy ones; but the whole expression of the face was more wistful than joyous.

"The resemblance is wonderful!" thought the painter. "How I wish she would wake, that I might see if she has the same blue eyes! In all else the likeness is perfect!"

The girl stirred uneasily, and awoke. She blushed crimson on seeing a stranger, and rising, said timidly,—

"I never meant to go to sleep! I—"

"Pray do not apologise," said Bruce Carew, kindly. "Indeed, it is I who should ask pardon for disturbing you, but when the servant told me you were here I thought I might be able to send a message for you to my sister. I shall be writing to her to-morrow."

"Thank you very much, but Mrs. Ainslie could not do what I wanted to ask her while she is in Italy."

"And what did you want to ask her? I am her brother, and anything you tell me shall be a secret if you wish it. But first, will you not tell me your name?"

"I am Nell. Mrs. Ainslie used to be very kind to me when she was at Marden a long while ago."

Bruce remembered then his sister's story of the sweet girl she wanted to adopt, and admitted any woman might have longed to call this child her own.

"I think I recollect. Mrs. Ainslie wanted you to be her own daughter, but your mother could not spare you. Marion was very much disappointed at the refusal."

"She was very kind to me. She had often asked me to come to her in any trouble. She always said she would do her best to keep me."

"And I am sure she would. But if the trouble is a pressing one, Miss Marsh, can't you let me be her substitute? Six weeks is a long while to wait!"

"I am afraid you could not help me."

"Try me. What did you want my sister to do for you?"

"I thought she would tell me how to earn my own living. I am nearly nineteen, and I shouldn't mind how hard I worked."

Bruce could have smiled at her eagerness; but he only sighed at the idea of hard work in connection with that fragile, childish form; then he noticed the black dress.

"Pardon me—but your mother?"

"Mamma knew I was coming. I had better tell you all about it, Mr. Carew. We are poor, but mother and Queenie are very proud. They would suffer any straight if only no one

knew it. Mother thinks it best to pinch and scrape to make our money go as far as it can. But I would much rather earn some more."

"I understand."

"You see," went on the girl, wistfully, "I love books and pictures and flowers. If I worked for money, no matter how hard the work was, I should have holidays sometimes, and be able to have little glimpses of pretty things. But now my life seems just going in one never-ending struggle to hide how poor we are and keep up appearances. I don't care to hide it. I don't like shams."

"What do you call shams?"

"Mother always lets the best rooms in the summer. We could not manage at all unless she did. But she and Queenie always tell the neighbours we have 'friends staying with us.' If we do anything that servants would do for us—if we had them—we draw down all the blinds that people may think we are out, and not come in to discover our homely occupation. And, oh! there are a host of things like that. I don't mind being poor, but all this pretence makes me wretched. And mother does not love me, not as she loves Queenie, I mean, so I thought she would not mind if I went out into the world to seek my fortune."

"Poor child!"

"I'm not a child," said the girl, simply; "and I was always very happy till I grew up and wanted more room."

"More room!" repeated Mr. Carew, surprised at the puns from such a tiny creature.

"Yes. Don't you know the flowers that gardeners call pot-herbs—that can't grow because of their pots? Well, I feel just like that. Whenever I want to do anything fresh I can't, because it is not genteel, or because it would betray how poor we are. I suppose I must be vulgar," said poor Nell, with a heavy sigh, "for whenever I want to do anything very much it is sure not to be genteel."

"Is your sister like you?" asked the artist, abruptly.

"Queenie like me!" and the blue eyes opened wide in surprise and reproach. "Oh, no! Mr. Carew, Queenie is very beautiful. Everyone admires her, and she never wanted to do anything in her life that wasn't genteel."

"Then I'm sure I should hate her! Forgive me, Miss Nell, but I am like you. I am always wanting to do things that people call queer. Well, now tell me how did you mean to earn this fortune you have come to seek?"

"I don't know," said Nell. "I'm afraid I can't do anything very well. I should like something best I could do at home."

He opened his eyes.

"What would they say?"

"Queenie would explain it somehow. I did do some very fine embroidery once for an old lady, and Queenie always told people it was for a friend. I can do all sorts of fancy work, and I think I could teach children, only then I must leave home."

"If you lived in London I could find you plenty to do for some time."

"Couldn't I do it at home?"

"Hardly! Do you know that I am an artist? Painting is my one gift!"

Nell's eyes glistened.

"I wish I could paint!"

"Why?"

"I am so fond of pictures!"

"How should you like to have a picture yourself? I am going to paint one for next year's Academy from 'Fennyson's' 'Fifths of the King,' and I want a model for my heroine. I have been seeking a face for months, and I never found one which fulfilled my meaning so well as yours."

"What should I have to do?"

"To sit still. I think that is the chief thing, and to look natural for another. Just think of some of your favourite stories, and never trouble yourself about time or anything."

"I wish I lived in London!"

"You know, Miss Marsh, I am not in the least advising you the career of an artist's model—that would not be worthy of you; but I am an old man—old enough to be your father. If Marion's wish of adopting you had been carried out you would have looked upon me as a kind of uncle. The highest ladies in the land have sat to me for their likenesses. I don't think," here he smiled, "even your sister would object to your spending some hours a week in my studio. In six weeks or two months we should have finished our labours, and by that time Marion will be at home, and able to give you her advice."

"If only I lived in London!"

"I am not sure that is an unconquerable difficulty. The fast trains only take an hour and a half between Victoria and Marden. Would the journey twice a week be too much for you, do you think?"

"Oh, no! but—" she blushed and faltered. How could she remind him that the fifteen shillings a week thus incurred for railway travelling would far exceed the value of her services to him. Perhaps he guessed what was in her mind, for he said quickly,—

"Of course, your travelling expenses would be my affair. Two such ungentle people as you and I are said to be may talk plainly of money matters. I could offer you three guineas a week, and if Mrs. Marsh will allow you to come I shall be truly grateful."

Nell looked wonderstruck.

"Three guineas a week!"

He smiled.

"Surely you did not expect me to offer you less? I shall need you for several hours, and there is all the time of the journey to think of."

"It seems a little fortune! My mother's whole income is under a pound a week after the rent is paid!"

"Well, you must do your best to persuade her to consent to your plans; but I assure you, Miss Marsh, I shall be your debtor. You can't understand, perhaps, what it means to an artist to find a face which harmonizes with the ideal he wishes to paint as his heroine."

Enter Martha Price.

"It's getting late, miss. I thought I'd better be telling you it was about time for you to start to catch the train."

Mr. Carew rose at once.

"You will allow me to see you to the station, if this is your first visit to London I am sure you need an escort."

Nell thought of her penniless condition, and hoped he would not propose an omnibus. He did not, but to her dismay hailed a cab.

A very pleasant drive brought them to Victoria full twenty minutes before the train started. With a word of apology Mr. Carew deposited Nell in the waiting-room, assuring her he should not be long; nor was he little more than five minutes, and he returned, a basket of delicate fruit and a bunch of hot-house flowers in his hand.

"You like pretty things, Miss Nell, so these will brighten your journey. Not a word. Why, it was my fault in hurrying you your primrose were left behind."

"I had almost forgotten them—I brought them for Mrs. Ainslie. She used to be so fond of primroses."

"She is still. Now you must let me put you into the train. I have taken your ticket."

It seemed wasteful to Nell not to make use of the shabby third-class return nestling in her pocket; but it would have been ridiculous to mention it to Mr. Carew, so she had to submit to travel in primrose, the solitary occupant of a first-class carriage; while the guard came to look at her so often during the journey she felt convinced she had been specially recommended to his care.

Nell felt strangely happy as she glided through the fair Kentish country. It was not the luxurious mode of travelling, not Mr. Carew's presents that elated her; but the

consciousness that she had something in view, something to look forward to.

"If only mother will consent!"

Mrs. Marsh was not a strong-minded woman, but, like many another weak character, she could be very tenacious at times—mostly about trifles. A very indulgent mother, she would never suffer either of the girls to question her about her past life, or to mention their father's name. Seldom as the postman came to the Cottage she never alluded to the few letters he brought her; and though they knew the exact amount of her income, and were allowed a voice in its expenditure, she never told them whence she received it.

Thinking over the chances in favour of her project, Nell felt that to succeed she must gain Queenie's approval first. Mrs. Marsh never refused a wish expressed by her first-born; if only Queenie could be persuaded the neighbours would not hear of Nell's enormities, and be won over by the thought of the additional grandeur to be enjoyed when Nell's earnings were received, why then it seemed to her she might really begin her visits to Bruce Carew's studio.

It was seven o'clock when she reached the Cottage, and to her dismay no one came out to greet her. She went into the best sitting-room—emptiness! She peeped into the little parlour, where they took their meals, but no one was there, and the table bore no preparation for tea. Sick at heart and with an undefined dread Nell went into the kitchen.

The Marshs were almost too poor to enjoy the luxury of a servant; but long years before the widow had been very kind to a rough woman, the terror of the village. She had nursed Sally through a dangerous illness, and gained from her a promise to mend her ways, with the result that the new Sally—a very reformed member of society—came to the Cottage to be instructed in household duties, with the view of going to service.

She learned readily, and in a few months could have got good wages as a general servant; but she point-blank refused to leave her benefactress. She could do without wages, she argued, and she could save them her keep over and over again.

In vain Mrs. Marsh protested—Sally refused to better herself. In time she became invaluable; baking, washing, and cleaning were the least of her accomplishments. She developed a talent for dressmaking, and in the evenings executed such stylish toilets for the village damsels that she could easily have become the most popular dressmaker in the place. This, however, she did not care for—she took in just enough needlework to give her about twelve pounds a year, which, she declared to Mrs. Marsh, was quite as much as she could spend.

She was devoted to the whole of the little family, but if she had a favourite it was Queenie. From the first she had been a perfect slave to the little beauty. No one knew poor Sally's real history. It may have been that once a dark-eyed child with hair like Queenie's had called her mother. Anyway, there was no danger she would not have faced, no suffering she would not have endured; and, in spite of her reformation, I much suspect no sin she would not have committed for the sake of her young lady.

"Hoo! Miss Nell!" she exclaimed when the girl came into the kitchen with pale face and trembling limbs, "you look like a ghost!"

"What is the matter, Sally, that there's nobody about? Where's mother?"

"The mistress is up in her own room, having one of those 'turn outs' that fret her so. She said she wouldn't be down again to-night. Miss Ruby had her tea early, and went out for a long walk; but yours is all ready, Miss Nell, and you shall have it instantly, for I'm sure you must want it after rampaging about London the live-long day."

Nell felt relieved, but still vexed; all her little plans seemed going away. If Queenie was out with any of her grand friends (Miss Marsh boasted one or two acquaintances she thought

very stylish, but who grated on her sister) she would return in a most exalted mood, in which she would be sure to pour cold water on Nell's project; and regarding the "turn outs" Sally had alluded to, Nell dreaded them as no one else did.

From her earliest recollections a large desk and a rough wooden box had stood in her mother's room. Both were kept locked, and neither of the girls had ever been suffered to see inside; but there were days, fixed by no exact date, but yet occurring every now and then, on which Mrs. Marsh would retire to her own room, and, with closed door, open these closed hiding-places, and brood over the relics of the past.

What these relics were, and what the past had been Nell had no idea; but she felt certain there was some heavy trouble hidden in her mother's heart, a trouble which the contents of the desk and ugly wooden box recalled.

Again and again she had begged her mother to give up these periodical reminiscences, which seemed to rend her heart, but Mrs. Marsh always refused. She seemed to have a melancholy delight in these examinations of her sad relics, and though her face was paler and her step feebler for days after, she could never be persuaded to omit them.

Sally fulfilled her promise; the tea soon followed Nell to the little parlour, and bearing in mind the very limited income of the little family, it was as tempting a repast as could have been devised—a cup of tea, hot, strong, and sweet, two rounds of delicious toast, hot and liberally spread with dripping. Sally set down these delicacies before her young lady, and then, as was her custom, prepared to speak her mind.

This sole retainer of the family had once been very handsome, and still retained the traces of past good looks. Sally was almost as dark as her favourite Queenie, but of a totally different type. Her complexion was a rich olive-brown, and there was a peculiar disguise about her hair which, with the colour of her skin, seemed to denote she had possessed dusky ancestors.

All Marden knew about her was that she had passed through the place with a camp of gipsies; her child being taken ill she remained perfect when the caravans moved on. She tended the little one with wonderful devotion, but no care could save the baby life. Then Sal's evil passions broke loose, and she was for the time the terror of Marden, as although she seemed to have no visible means of earning money she yet always had sufficient of it for all she fancied. A few wisecracks set her down as a witch, and she was on the point of being hunted out of the place when she fell ill, and Mrs. Marsh, to the wonder and admiration of the village, nursed her back to health.

"It is nothing," the widow had said, deprecatingly, when the vicar commended her noble act. "Indeed, I have often longed for a chance of doing good. I think for three long years, Mr. Bailey, I have had but one ambition—to save a human life!"

"Well, you have done so, my dear lady; and I might almost say a human soul also, for Wild Sal seems a different creature."

Mrs. Marsh had feared her protégée would relapse into her old ways, being in the same place, but her fears were not realized.

Fifteen years came and went, and Sal's reformation never failed. She was a peculiar woman; she minded no labour, no trouble, for those she loved; but she expected a share of the family's affection, and to be allowed to express her free opinion on all that concerned it; also there was a kind of summer-house or shed in the garden with a window which, from the moment she came, she had taken possession of. In spite of all Mrs. Marsh's cautions of rheumatism and the like Sally would have no other bedroom.

There were two windows in the rustic building; these she adorned with neat white muslin blinds, and (after she began to earn money) in time she purchased a thick curtain, which

was drawn across the middle dividing the shed in two parts. One was Sally's bedroom and sacred to herself, the other boasted a large wooden table with drawers, one or two packing-cases with lids, two chairs, and a looking-glass! Here Sally received her clients, mostly of the humbler class, and went through the mysteries of cutting out and trying on.

The shed, under her clean hands, really began to resemble a wooden cottage, and Sally was intensely proud of it. She stood now opposite Nell and watched her eat her toast and drink her tea. Not until both had disappeared did she say determinedly,—

"I want to speak to you, Miss Nell."

"Yes, Sally," said Nell, rousing herself by an effort. "What is it?"

Though Queenie was her darling Sally always addressed her opinions to Nell. She observed once to her mistress Miss Nell had more common sense than all of them—a remark Mrs. Marsh felt was hardly complimentary to herself.

"Miss Queenie hasn't no pa," began Sally, fiercely, "nor no brother neither, and your ma's too good to think of harm. So it seems to me, Miss Nell, it's just my place and yours to look after her."

Nell felt puzzled. Was it her mother or Queenie whom Sally considered in need of surveillance, and what had either of them to arouse such an opinion?

"I know mother is not strong," returned Nell, gently. "But I don't think she is more ailing than usual."

"She wasn't," said Sally, with an emphatic stress on the past tense. "She'll make herself ill enough over this 'turn out'; but it was Miss Queenie I meant."

"Queenie is quite well!"

"Miss Nell, do be sensible and listen. I may be only a servant, but I haven't lived in Marden all my life, and I know what's what. It's not as should be for a pretty young creature like Miss Queenie to steal out night after night to meet a young man who hasn't the spirit to propose to her even if his father do own the biggest house in Marden."

Nell's face blanched. It came on her like a sudden inspiration that Queenie was absent from them quite three evenings out of the seven. She would have the most natural excuses. This girl had asked her to run over and practice a duet, or that one had promised to show her a pattern; or perhaps she would have a headache, which only fresh air could cure; or she would be seized with sudden compassion for Nero, the big Newfoundland, and declare she must give him a little run.

They were the most natural and ingenious excuses. Nell, open herself as the day, could never have suspected their deceit till Sally's remonstrance. Then her eyes opened. She seemed to recollect, as though by instinct, that none of the girls supposed to have practised the duets, or shown the patterns, ever alluded to Queenie's evening visits. And she did think once she had heard Nero howling after Queenie had started on her benevolent expedition.

All these things rushed through her mind, but she was very staunch to her sister. She would rather own herself mistaken a dozen times than suspect Queenie of deceiving her.

"Sally!" she said, eagerly, "you must be mistaken; she couldn't do it. I know who you mean, and I don't believe Queenie would marry him for worlds."

"He will be a rich man, Miss Nell, if he keeps in with his father. The old fellow would never sanction his marrying Miss Queenie, though she's worlds too good for him, so you see harm must come of it."

"But of what? What have you seen?"

"Austin Brooks set his mind on our young lady—and it's not a little he'll stop at. Why, Miss Nell, haven't you seen the big gold locket he gave her not a week ago?"

"She never showed it to me."

"She never showed it to me," retorted Sally; "but when there's so much at stake I

don't wait for people to show me things—I look for myself. There's the locket and his portrait, and a ring, besides a heap of letters; and if you doubt what I tell you, Miss Nell, I advise you, tired as you are, to put on your hat again and go for a stroll in Chestnut Valley. If anyone you meet there grumbles, tell them your head ached too, and you thought a little fresh air 'ld be good for you as well as other people."

"Then you think—?"

"I don't think at all. I'm certain that wretched Brooks is in Chestnut Valley, and my Miss Queenie with him!"

Nell sighed—she was tired, very tired; and besides bodily fatigue, her whole nature shrank from the task before her.

She knew the Brooks's only by report and seeing them in church. The family had only come to Marden a few months before, and the Marsh's were not sufficiently important to call on them.

Samuel Brooks, the father, had made a fortune in the provision trade, but no one knew the exact amount. Probably it was large, for his five daughters were most elaborately dressed, and his sons seemed to have plenty of money. Austin, the eldest, was a sailor, but it was commonly reported his next voyage would be his last, as the father was getting in years, and wanted him at home. The others were both in a large city house—mere lads, still in their teens. The Brooks's were not gentle-folks, but education had so far polished up the younger generation that Austin might easily have been described as gentlemanly. For the rest, he was a good-looking young fellow, very *empressé* in his manners to ladies, a little loud when excited, and decidedly of a passionate temper.

Nell would as soon have thought of the Brooks's gardener as a suitor for her sister; but then she was a girl apt to forget the importance of money.

When she remembered, Queenie's ambitions pointed only to marrying a rich man, she felt, with a pang at her heart, Sally's warning might not have been so unheeded after all.

She walked quickly on. She hated her errand. If (how she detested the thought!) Sally were right, and she surprised Queenie with her lover, she would receive a sharp reprimand from her sister afterwards; if not, it would be difficult to explain her presence.

She had gone half-way down Chestnut Valley when she saw her sister. Queenie was standing still, her hand clasped in Austin Brooks's, while by the moon's flickering light (it was getting late now, for Sally's confidence had taken time), he placed a ring on her finger. Nell's heart sank.

Mr. Brooks was the first to perceive her—a tall, fair-haired young man, with a fresh, open face, and a kindly expression. He was not a gentleman, but his face was good-natured and honest. Why had he not conducted his wooing openly?

"Here's your sister," he said, loud enough for Nell to hear. "Wont you introduce me?"

"Nell, what on earth are you doing here?" inquired Miss Marsh, haughtily.

"I got frightened about you, dear. Mother has gone to bed, and I was all alone."

Of course," interposed Austin, kindly, "it was most natural to try and find your sister. You don't look one given to betray secrets, and so we will trust you with ours."

"We had far better not," said Queenie, but the young man pleaded his cause well. Nell felt herself relenting.

"I join my ship to-morrow, and for nearly three months I shall be away. You can't suspect me of private meetings with your sister when I am in Africa. So it would be ungenerous to tell your mother of this one."

"I shall not tell her," said Nell, proudly, "but I don't understand. When did you get to know this gentleman, Queenie? And why did you keep it secret?"

"At my wish!" said Austin, simply. "I have the most indulgent, and yet the most cantankerous of fathers. He took it into his

head that I was never to think of marrying till I had left the sea. Well, in less than three months I *shall* have left it, and then I can go to him boldly and tell him about Queenie; but till then I am obliged to be silent."

"Now perhaps you are satisfied, Nell?" said her sister, ungraciously. "Pray, are there any more questions you would like to ask?"

Poor Nell trembled, and Austin, who was a good-natured young fellow, interposed.

"Don't be too hard on her, Queenie. You see, Miss Nell, we couldn't be engaged openly, but we love each other, and three months will soon pass. In July I shall come back to claim your sister's promise, and ask your mother to accept me as a son-in-law."

"But your father?"

"The governor and I always hit it off. When he knows I mean to marry Queenie, and no one else, he will hear reason, and end by being proud of my beautiful darling!"

Nell stood there spellbound. She felt, rather than saw, that Austin stooped and kissed her sister's face. She wished herself anywhere else instead of there—an unwilling third at the lovers' adieu.

"You will be true to me, Queenie?" pleaded Austin. "I know you are a hundred times too beautiful and good for a rough fellow like me; but I love you, dear. No one in all the world could care for you more than I do."

"Of course I will be true to you!" said Queenie, prettily. "I think you might trust me better, Austin!"

"You are so lovely, and so many will envy me! Queenie remember, you hold my life in your hands. It would be worthless to me if you were faithless."

Nell hated herself for reflecting her sister was not likely to be faithless, since in all Marden no other man could offer her fairer prospects. The thought *would* come into her mind, though she knew it was treachery to her sister. She was conscious Austin was tender-hearted. He was not a gentleman, there was nothing aristocratic about him; but at least one part of Sally's warning was groundless—he was to be trusted. Unless he died on the voyage he would come back in three months' time to marry Queenie.

Nothing very memorable had ever happened within Nell's recollection. They had always been poor, always hard-up, with nothing special to look forward to. She had often wished "something" would happen, something new, even if it made her sorry; and so the something *had* happened, and little Nell knew not whether she was glad or sorry.

She tried to fancy Queenie married, and living in the great house. She tried to fancy her and her mother pursuing their humble way without the beautiful sister, but here she failed. No power of hers could imagine Mrs. Marsh without her first-born.

"It would break mother's heart to give up Queenie, I am certain!"

Perhaps so. The sacrifice was never exacted—the widow kept her darling by her to the end.

"Nell," said Queenie, suddenly putting her hand on the girl's shoulder, pettishly, "Why are you standing there like a statue? Austin has been gone full five minutes, and we ought to be half way home. If you hold your tongue, like a good girl, I won't be angry with you for finding out our secret. I wanted to talk to someone."

"Are you very happy?"

"What a question!"

"I thought love made everyone happy!"

"Does it! Oh, I shall be happy enough, Nell. I shall be the richest woman in Marden, and have the finest house."

"And you will have someone to love you always!" put in Nell quietly.

Queenie made no reply. Beautiful as a poet's dream, could it be that she was heartless and incapable of love? The answer to this question lies in the future; but one thing was certain—she did not love her promised husband, Austin Brooks.

(To be continued.)

MY MOTHER'S FACE.

—*—

There is one face of all the world
The fairest face to me,
Fairer than any artist's dream
Of angel faces could be.
I see it in my dreams at night;
I see it in the day;
The glory of that angel smile
Lights all my weary way.

When but a little wayward child
I sought my perfect rest,
My tired head pillowed peacefully
Upon my mother's breast.
That same sweet face above me bent;
That smile upon me shone;
And now into my inmost soul
Its peacefulness has grown.

The fairest maiden in the world
Is not so sweetly fair;
I see her with her glossy bands
Of silver-sprinkled hair,
That fall in parted ripples down
Beside the tranquil brow,
The blessing from her calm, brown eyes
Is with me even now.

I feel upon my fevered brow
The touch of her cool hand;
I hear the music of her voice,
I hear and understand
'Tis she who guides me tenderly
With wisdom pure and strong;
I feel her chiding when my heart
Turns wilfully to wrong.

My work is in the busy world,
Life's hurry and turmoil;
Her home is where the blessed rest
From all their earthly toil.
But in my life her presence lives
To light each desert place;
O! memory blest and beautiful—
My angel mother's face.

A. K.

THE GOLDEN HOPE.

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CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

"Mr tender-hearted little girl would even yet shield her cousin, I see," said the Baroness, with a proud, fond smile. "I respect your motives, Cecile, and do honour to your noble, generous, and forgiving heart. As I said, Hellice shall have a home here in my house, but there is no room for her in my heart."

"But, mamma," pleaded the girl.

Lady Redwoode shook her head at the implied remonstrance.

"If you knew, my darling," she said, "how the wrong inflicted upon me by my brother yet rankles in my heart you would not ask me to do violence to myself by trying to love his child. Is she not vain and deceitful?"

Cecile replied only by a significant silence.

"You are too truthful to say no, my dearest, and too merciful to say yes. I would that she deserved such kind treatment at your hands. But go on, Cecile. Tell me how Renee became attached to you."

"I think it was because I was so helpless, and that no one loved me," said Cecile, without looking up. "Renee was often no better than the rest, but she could not look coldly upon her nursing, the child who clung to her above all others. As was natural, she preferred Hellice, but Hellice repulsed her when I clung to her as my only friend. I used to think it hard that even my nurse should love Hellice best for her dark skin and her dark hair. But when papa—that is, Uncle Glinwick—was dying he summoned Renee, Hellice, and me, each to a separate interview in his chamber. What he said to them I do not know, but from that hour my cousin began to treat me with increased

respect, and our ayah fawned upon me continually."

"But what did he tell you?"

"He told me that Hellice and I were not sisters, that one of us was the daughter of Lady Redwoode, but which it was he would not reveal. I implored him to say if I were your child, but he refused. Then a thought seemed to strike him, and he muttered something of which I could only distinguish the words 'Agatha,' 'mother's instinct,' and 'her features may betray.' I asked him what he meant, and he answered by excitedly imploring me to promise that, if by any chance you should select me as your daughter, I would share all my honours and wealth with Hellice. I promised him and he grew content."

"Here is confirmation of the blessed truth!" cried the Baroness, her countenance transfigured with joy. "How little Horatio dreamed that those words would yet decide my choice, and set at rest my last doubt! I no longer fear to claim you, Cecile!"

"But hear the rest, mamma. Papa—Uncle Glinwick—died, and, with our ayah, Hellice and I started for England. One evening during the first week on shipboard we lingered on deck later than the other passengers. Then Renee said to me that papa had feared that your choice would fall on me, and she asked if it should if I would not make her my only attendant and give her all her wishes, as she had always loved me. How could I refuse her, mamma? I knew she loved Hellice best; I knew her only motive was cupidity or avarice; I knew that she wanted Hellice to be chosen before me, and that she spoke merely from a momentary fear that I might be preferred, but she had been my earliest and only friend. If she does not love me, I love her. So I promised her that, in the event of my being chosen, I would provide for her and Hellice, but I believed then that you would never be able to choose between us, and that you would perhaps adopt us equally. I never even dreamed that the lonely, despised Cecile would be chosen before Hellice. So, mamma, dear, you have the outline of the whole story. Ask me what you will, and question Hellice and Renee!"

"I have no need to question anyone, my daughter," and the Baroness smiled brightly. "Your artless story has brought confirmation of my hopes in every sentence. You have established yourself firmly in my heart, and I shall never again doubt that you are the child of my lost and honoured Rolfe!"

"And Hellice, mamma?"

"I leave her to you entirely. I have no wish to say much to her, but I shall treat her with due civility. It is impossible to send her away, Cecile, but I must beg you not to be too friendly with her. Some especial providence has guarded you against contamination from her society and companionship, but it is not pleasing to me to have my pure-minded Cecile intimate with one whom she knows to be full of deceit!"

"Your wish shall be my law, mamma," said Cecile, forcing herself to raise her eyes to those of Lady Redwoode. "My only wish is to please you."

It was not the fearless look of innocence that glowed in Cecile's blue orbs as she spoke, nor was the expression of her face honest and upright. She had a guilty look that all her art could not conceal, but which, unfortunately, the Baroness was too blinded by happiness to observe.

"It is settled, then, Cecile, that you are my own," said Lady Redwoode, bending over the girl with solemn, ineffable tenderness. "I have no more doubts—no more fears. I am impatient to proclaim your relationship to me and establish your position in my household. I will ring at once and summon Hellice and my nephew, Mr. Forsythe."

She put this resolve into execution, sending a messenger to both individuals mentioned, and then awaited their arrival.

Mr. Forsythe came in first, handsomely at-

tired and apparently solicitous to make a favourable impression upon Cecile.

The maiden arose and received him graciously, and Lady Redwoode remarked with pleasure that his ardent, admiring glance called up the blushes to Cecile's cheeks.

"My little girl is but a timid child still, Andrew," she said, putting her arm around the girl's waist and drawing her nearer. "She is beginning to tremble already at the ordeal of an introduction to the household in her proper character, and I shall depend upon you to assist me in sustaining her courage if it be likely to fail," and her ladyship smiled reassuringly at Cecile.

Mr. Forsythe was about to utter some reply complimentary to Cecile as the door again opened, and Hellice made her appearance.

The words he would have said were stayed on his lips, and he was for a full moment forgetful of everything and everyone but the rejected cousin.

She came in quietly, yet with those graceful, leopard-like movements that distinguished her from other women.

Her lithe, swaying figure was robed in a cool, grey dress of grenadine, which swept about her in ample folds.

Her collar of filmy lace was caught together by a carbuncle brooch, that glowed upon her bosom like a living coal.

She had thrown about her shoulders an Indian shawl of the most vivid scarlet, and its warm tone contrasted admirably with her delicately dark complexion.

But though her dress was perfect, her face attracted more attention. Her cheeks had bloomed into a lovely, dusky red, such as is seldom seen save upon the petals of an autumn rose.

Her lips were two glowing scarlet curves, full of sweetness and sensitiveness. Her dark hair fell over her shoulders in rippling waves, more beautiful than the curling tendrils of a vine, and bearing upon their glossy surface an unrivalled bloom.

But it was in her eyes—her grey and glowing eyes, so full of lights and shadows, so superb in their lustre, so glorious in their depth of soul and expression—that lay the charm that had fascinated Mr. Forsythe.

The young girl came forward with unaffected shyness, as if not quite certain of her reception, looked up at the Baroness with a sweet and tranquil gaze, and then advanced to Cecile, offering her hand affectionately.

"Let me congratulate, dear cousin!" she said, in a low, fluttering voice. "I was afraid you would think I did not share in your joy, but I do, with all my heart."

Cecile glanced at Lady Redwoode to observe the effect upon her of this magnanimous speech, and replied,—

"You are not dissatisfied then, Hellice? You had not expected that mamma would choose you as her daughter?"

The sweet, spirited face of Hellice wavered a little in its dusky bloom, and a strangely yearning look appeared in her eyes, as she responded,—

"I expected nothing, Cecile—nothing that I have not already received. I do not see how Lady Redwoode could have chosen differently, for you closely resemble her."

Cecile was pleased and flattered at this compliment, and gratefully pressed her cousin's hand.

She knew, if Hellice did not, how much this generosity of Hellice conspired to establish herself in Lady Redwoode's love.

She knew that the ready acquiescence of her cousin in the present state of affairs would be construed by her ladyship as the result of a knowledge that Cecile was the daughter of the Baroness, and she could cordially have embraced her cousin for thus unconsciously playing into her hands.

"I congratulate you too, Aunt Agatha," said Hellice, in her sweet tones, now tremulous and uncertain, as she turned towards Lady Redwoode. "Cecile has been a dear sister to me, and I am persuaded that she

will be a good daughter to your ladyship. Papa always loved her tenderly, perhaps from remorse at having deprived her of her mother, and, remembering that, I hope that you will not feel harshly towards him now."

Lady Redwoode felt uncomfortable under the girl's pleading look.

In spite of her efforts to prevent it, her heart warmed strangely to this dark-haired maiden; but, when she would have answered her kindly, Cecile's accusation of deceitfulness arose against Hellice, and her heart grew cold again.

"I do not feel harshly towards my brother now," she said, gravely, and with some formality of manner that must have chilled her niece. "The dead have no faults, Hellice. I forgave Horatio in the hour when I learned about his death, and his resolve to restore to me my child. We need never speak of him again."

Hellice bowed, but a feeling of grief and pain darkened her eyes to almost midnight darkness.

It was not sorrow, perhaps, on account of her dead father, but rather because the full tide of love she would have lavished upon her newly-found relative had been forced back upon her own soul.

She felt wounded, hurt, grieved and indignant, possibly, for Hellice's nature was too ardent and impulsive to be meek and humble.

She saw, at a glance, that in Lady Redwoode's heart there was no room for the daughter of Horatio Glinwick, and words cannot describe her terrible sense of desolation.

"I am all alone," she murmured, almost unconsciously.

Lady Redwoode was reminded of Cecile's complaint of life-long neglect at the hands of her relatives, and saw in this remark only a righteous retribution for the wrongs Hellice had in her prosperity inflicted upon Cecile. But when the dark eyes brimmed over with tears, and the little dark head drooped, her generous soul was moved to pity.

"Hellice," she said, kindly, and then paused—the current of her feelings again changed, for Hellice's moment of weakness had passed.

The little head was lifted proudly now, the royal scarlet flamed again in cheeks and lips, the dark eyes looked again serenely tranquil, her dainty shoulders lifted themselves under the gloomy waves of rippling hair trailing over them, and Hellice bore herself with conscious pride and rectitude.

Alas, that Lady Redwoode had been so prejudiced against the maiden as to misinterpret so thoroughly the change in her manner.

"As I said before, Hellice," observed her ladyship, more coldly than she had hitherto spoken to the orphan, "Redwoode shall be your home, and I will be your protector. I trust you will be happy here."

"Thank you, Aunt Agatha," replied the young girl, quietly. "I have a happy disposition, and have no doubt I shall be contented here. I am grateful for your kindness."

With a half-haughty inclination of her head she turned away, retreating to a window-seat, whither Mr. Forsythe followed her with his glances.

He had intended to bestow his affections upon the chosen heiress, believing, of course, that they were under his control. He had intended to love and wed the lady who could best advance his worldly interests, and there could be no question but that that lady was the fair-haired Cecile Avon. He still intended to lay siege to her heart and to win her if possible for his bride, but the delicate, dark loveliness of Hellice, so like a night-sky gemmed with stars, had touched his heart as Cecile's blonde beauty could never do.

The bright, sparkling face of Hellice, with its dusky, red cheeks, its clear, shadowy eyes, and its frame of lovely rippling hair, had already indelibly impressed its image upon his heart, and, whosoever he might wed, it was certain that his love was given to the rejected maiden.

Cecile saw and understood his lingering glance after her more lovely cousin, and was piqued by it. All her life she had been more or less jealous of the superior attractions of Hellice, and had exhibited this jealousy by frequent slights and displays of superciliousness, such as could not fail to wound her high-spirited young relative. She had spoken falsely to Lady Redwoods when declaring that she had been unloved and neglected, for such had been the lot of Hellice, while she had been petted and caressed without limit. This unlicensed indulgence had made her selfish and exacting, and she became pale with anger as Mr. Forsythe continued oblivious of her presence while regarding Hellice.

The next moment, however, the young gentleman became conscious of his rudeness, and turned upon her a gaze flattering enough to soothe her wounded vanity.

"I conclude, dear Lady Redwoods," he said, turning from Cecile to the Baroness, "that you have settled your dear daughter's identity beyond all doubt. If so, the sooner her relationship to you be proclaimed the better."

"You are right, Andrew," replied her ladyship. "You may summon the household to the hall, and the introduction shall take place immediately."

Mr. Forsythe bowed and withdrew. He was absent but a few minutes, returning with the news that the household had assembled, and was duly prepared to welcome their young mistress.

"Come my daughter!" said the Baroness, offering her arm, and looking proudly upon the beautiful blonde beside her. "You are agitated, I see, but there is no cause for excitement of any kind. I have thought it best to make a public acknowledgment of our relationship, because my first marriage was kept secret, and because, if I do not, people will wonder and gossip until they have made a mountain out of a molehill. Besides, my love, these servants of ours are faithful old retainers of the Redwoods family, as were their fathers before them. I consider them as humble friends, and I know that many of them would impair their lives to secure my happiness. They will rejoice in my happiness, and I know they are longing to look at the young lady who will yet reign over them."

She spoke lightly as she concluded, desiring to encourage her daughter, but Cecile looked from her to Hellice, who was gazing from the window, with a singular and inexplicable agitation.

"What is it, my own darling?" inquired the Baroness, following her glances. "Ah, I comprehend. You fear to wound your cousin's feelings. This exquisite sensibility does you honour, my sweet child, but I fear," and she spoke in a whisper, "that it is quite misplaced. Are you ready?"

Cecile calmed herself by an effort, gave a quick look from the corners of her eyes at her reflection in an adjacent mirror, and then took Lady Redwoods's arm, leaning upon it with a confidence that was more than ever child-like.

"Come, Hellice," she said, as she moved towards the door, preceded by Mr. Forsythe. "I must have you near me."

The supple, grey-robed figure, with its bright drapery of scarlet and gold, arose from the distant window-seat, and followed them slowly to the hall.

As Mr. Forsythe had said, the entire household was gathered together to greet the daughter of their honoured mistress. The men, in their gay livery, headed by the butler, stood on one side, and the women, neatly dressed, and under the charge of the portly housekeeper, lined the opposite side. Between the opposing lines stood a round, rosy little man, with a bald head, a businesslike air, and quick, energetic movements. He was Kenneth, the steward, bailiff, and confidential adviser of Lady Redwoods, and was as faithful to his employer as the sun to its course.

He had once studied law, with a view to

seeking admission to the bar, and his legal acumen and correct mode of thinking were brought into frequent requisition by Lady Redwoods, who regarded him as a friend. He was a gentleman by birth and habits, and was a constant and honoured member of the family.

He came forward to meet the lovely Baroness and the beautiful girl hanging upon her arm, and acknowledged his introduction to the latter by a profound and admiring bow.

"What a marvellous resemblance she bears to your ladyship!" he exclaimed, involuntarily. "Lady Redwoods, you could not have chosen otherwise," he added, as his gaze encountered Hellice. "They are both very beautiful, but the blonde can have no Hindoo blood in her!"

"So I believed!" responded Lady Redwoods, with a warm smile. "Cecile is mine beyond all question. My heart and my head both acknowledge her, yet I am glad to have your approval of my choice, Mr. Kenneth."

The little man bowed and retreated to his former position, yet farther into the background. The Hindoo ayah arose from a seat in a distant corner and approached the scene of interest, her black eyes glittering like polished steel, and her brown face shining under its Madras turban. Hellice glided out of the drawing-room and stood in the shadow of the wall, her dark-grey eyes glowing like twin stars, and one small, fair hand laid unconsciously against her heart.

Into the midst of this scene, at the head of the hall, looking down upon the double line of servants, came the stately mistress of the dwelling, with Cecile on her arm, looking like twin angels of light.

A hearty rousing cheer, such as can come only from the throats of British yeomen, arose to welcome them, and was echoed again and again, until the vaulted roof rang with the joyous sound.

When silence was restored, Lady Redwoods bowed and said,—

"My friends—for you are all my tried and faithful friends—I need not explain to you my early history. Mr. Kenneth has, agreeably to my wishes, informed you that I was a widow when I was wedded to my late lamented husband, Lord Redwoods. This young lady on my arm is Miss Cecile Aven, the only child of my first marriage. I present her to you and to the world as my own and beloved daughter, the heiress of all my possessions, and the future owner of Redwoods."

This simple speech was sufficient to establish Cecile's position beyond all doubt. Mr. Kenneth approached the young lady to tender his congratulations on her being restored to her mother, while again the hall rang with joyous shouts of welcome to the daughter of the Lady of Redwoods.

It was a proud moment for Cecile.

Her fair face glowed with excitement, and she stood unsupported, listening to the sounds of adulation as if entranced by them. The colour in her cheeks was unwavering, her blue eyes shone, and her lips were parted in a smile. The assurance of the Baroness that Redwoods would yet be hers inflated her ambition to its utmost tension. She felt like a young queen receiving homage, and bowed graciously first upon one side and then on the other, dispensing smiles very liberally to all.

The majority of the household were in raptures with their young mistress, but a few there were who looked from her to the bright-eyed maiden in the shadow, and wished that she, in her dark and sparkling loveliness, and with features instinct with soul, had been the daughter of Lady Redwoods.

It is singular how, sometimes, simple souls, ignorant of all learning, are yet quick in the art of reading faces, and know by intuition whose souls are grand and noble, and whose are petty and ignoble.

Hellice looked upon the scene of rejoicing without one pang of envy. She noticed Cecile's proud bearing; the ayah's joy and satisfaction, evident in every feature; the proud joy of Lady

Redwoods, as she looked upon her daughter; and she heard the ringing acclamations of the servants.

No one spoke of her, no one greeted her; she would have gone to her cousin but that she feared a repulse. Lonely, sad, and miserably desolate, in the midst of all that rejoicing, she looked about her for some means of escape.

The wide door by which they had entered the mansion was open and near at hand. With a hurried glance about her, and suppressing a sob as she saw how thoroughly neglected she was, she glided to the door, descended the steps, and flitted away among the trees, seeking amidst their shades some comfort in her loneliness.

Cecile, thoroughly forgetful of her, lingered in the hall, loth to quit the pleasant scene, but was at length reconducted by Lady Redwoods to the drawing-room, where Mr. Forsythe and Mr. Kenneth contributed to swell her pride and strengthen the mother's heart by commenting upon the resemblance between them, and expressing their delight that Mr. Glintwick's cruel plans had been frustrated and the rightful heiress discovered.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, there are looks and tones that dart
An instant sunshine through the heart,
As if the soul that minute caught
Some treasure it through life had sought."
— Moore.

THE weird face, which had glanced in unobserved upon Sir Richard Haughton's interview with his divorced wife, belonged to Mr. William Haughton, the younger brother of the late Baronet, and, consequently, the uncle of our hero. On observing the occupation of his nephew he had hastily retreated to the inn-yard, where he waited, amusing himself by caressing his horses, conversing with his personal attendant, a shrewd-faced lad, or beholding a few adventurous flowers with his riding-whip.

Mr. William Haughton, as has been indicated, was a singular-looking personage, tall and slender, slightly stooping in figure, fair-haired, and with undeniable Haughton features.

His singularity lay in their uncertain, irregular, and changing expression, and in the shifting glances of his blue eyes. His countenance conveyed the impression of physical weakness and mental aberration.

He seemed to be an amiable but eccentric gentleman, and such indeed he was. Gifted, originally, with a keen, strong intellect and unusual powers of discrimination, he had had the misfortune to be "crossed in love," as the phrase goes, in his youth, and had recovered from a consequent illness with his mind unbalanced and his guiding perceptions destroyed.

Gentle, kind-hearted, and gay, capable of carrying on a lengthened conversation with a stranger without betraying his peculiarities, he was yet a prey to vagaries which gave evidence of insanity.

He had a strong taste for mechanics, and was always engaged in the invention of some stupendous machine that should astonish the world and immortalise his name.

At one time a peculiar boat, to be propelled by some complicated machinery, employed his inventive faculties, and he laboured upon it for months, weaving wheels within wheels, until the intricate mass of iron and steel was beyond all comprehension, except, and perhaps including, his own.

This invention had its trial in a lake upon Sir Richard's grounds, in the presence of an admiring crowd of servants and tenants, but came to an inglorious end, sinking so rapidly that its unfortunate inventor was near being engulfed in a watery grave.

At another time he had constructed a gigantic balloon, carrying out his operations upon the top of his nephew's dwelling, and had actually made a voyage in his aerial car as far

as the nearest tree, from which he and the wreck of his invention had been rescued at considerable risk to rescuer and rescued.

Again, he had laboured months upon an automatic horse, constructed of iron, with which he intended to course up and down the country roads with the speed of lightning, and with flames bursting from the mouth and nostrils of his formidable steed. He filled up the interior of his automaton with machinery, which when in motion produced a sound resembling distant thunder.

This wild scheme was a very favourite one with him, and he confidently anticipated, in case of his success, an order from the War Office for several regiments of automatic steeds to be kept until government should require them to strike terror to the heart of a national enemy. Unfortunately for the country and his ambition, his invention was blown up in process of heating, and before he could replace his loss some other vagary had engaged his attention.

From these indications, the character and disposition of the unfortunate gentleman can be readily discovered. As may be supposed, his ideas received little encouragement from Sir Richard, who, however, treated his relative with uniform kindness, consideration, and affection.

Mr. Haughton was a daily visitor at Redwoode, and fancied that he had discovered in the Baroness a congenial spirit. She was the confidant of his schemes, his apparent sympathizer, and earnest friend. Lady Redwoode pitied and esteemed him equally, and in her kind-heartedness, was never weary of listening to his wandering fancies, or beguiling him with music, of which she was a skilful exponent.

Mr. Haughton employed himself while waiting for his nephew, as we have stated, not he began to grow impatient, when at last the young Baronet, with his hat drawn down over his eyes, and with a quick and nervous step, made his appearance. The uncle, with a joyful exclamation, hastened to meet him.

"Ah, here you are, Dick!" he said, pulling his arm through that of his nephew. "But how pale you look! I want to talk with you. Just let Hodge take your horse and mine home, while we walk. I have news of the utmost importance to communicate to you."

"Very well, uncle," responded Sir Richard, finding even in the society of his unfortunate relative some relief from his own thoughts. "Walking or riding—it's all the same to me."

Mr. Haughton gave the necessary instructions to his servants, and then, arm-in-arm with his nephew, set out across the fields at a sauntering pace in the direction of Sea View.

"Richard," he said, hesitatingly, after a brief silence, "was that person at the inn that address you gave you so much trouble some years ago?"

"The same," responded the Baronet, laconically.

"What did she want, Richard? She knows she isn't your wife."

"True, uncle. She was simply enacting a bit of private theatricals before an unappreciative audience," and Sir Richard smiled bitterly.

Mr. Haughton pressed his arm in earnest sympathy, and walked on for a few moments deeply absorbed in thought. Suddenly he started, as he was wont to do in the moment of the conception of his most brilliant schemes, paused abruptly, and regarded his nephew with a countenance irradiated by an expression of the most active benevolence.

"Richard," he said, confidentially, and with emphatic earnestness, raising his forefinger impressively, "I've got an idea. This actress married you once, and clouded your life, and made almost a hermit of you, and you had great trouble to get rid of her. Now she has come back again, after a lapse of years, and my opinion is she will determinedly stick to you as long as life remains. Permit me as a favour, my dear Richard, to arrange

this delicate little matter for you. I can relieve you at once and for ever of her attentions."

"But how?"

The benevolent expression of Mr. Haughton's face deepened, his manner grew more impressive and confidential, and he elevated his forefinger to a still higher degree.

"Richard!" he exclaimed, glancing around him, and then fixing his gaze upon the Baronet, "as I said, an idea has occurred to me. I will invent a small infernal machine, you know, and put it in a scent-bottle and send it to her! What do you think of that, my boy? Science shall step in to relieve you of her persecutions."

"But, uncle—"

"Say nothing, Richard. I comprehend your gratitude, but I do not wish to be overwhelmed with thanks," and Mr. Haughton waved his hand magnanimously. "It is but a trifling service, and I shall perform it with the greatest pleasure."

"I want no such service," replied Sir Richard. "The woman is nothing to me, and you must not seek to harm a hair of her head. Employ yourself with innocent schemes, but do not seek to injure anyone. The actress, as you call her, is completely dead to me, and I never wish to hear of her again. Forget her, Uncle William, as I shall do."

Mr. Haughton looked crestfallen and disappointed. He attempted a remonstrance, but failed, on encountering the firm and resolute look of his nephew.

After a brief struggle with himself he seemed to resolve to make the best of the circumstances, and acquiesced in the Baronet's decision.

"Let it be as you say, Richard," he said, in a subdued manner. "I won't harm her, but I could have invented a machine no bigger than a toy that would have put her out of the way in the most scientific manner. I wish you had a little more spirit—but let it pass, you shall never hear that woman's name or designation from my lips again. She is dead to me!"

He again took the Baronet's arm, and they walked on in silence.

It was a pleasant and picturesque route by which they proposed returning to Sea View.

The path wound through green and pleasant fields, where young grain waved like green billows in the sunshine; through a heavily wooded plantation, where the shadows lay thickly on the ground, even in the daytime, and where hosts of birds held high carnival in the summer hours by the brook belonging to Redwoode Manor.

In fact, the route lay entirely across the domain of Redwoode, and commanded at various points a glimpse of some of its most remarkable beauties.

On this occasion, however, neither Sir Richard nor his uncle appeared to notice the scenery around them, the former being so oblivious indeed that his relative had drawn him into a by-path diverging from their route without arousing his attention.

"Where are we going?" he asked, at length, abruptly, becoming conscious of making the ascent of the hill, which was crowned by the mansion of Redwoode.

"Up to Redwoode, of course," replied Mr. Haughton, as if the matter had been settled beforehand. "You need to be cheered up, and if anyone can cheer you it's Lady Redwoode, with her music. Besides, Richard, we must go and congratulate her ladyship."

"Congratulate her!" exclaimed the Baronet, pausing in the ascent and turning an astonished face upon his companion. "You don't mean that Lady Redwoode is going to marry again?"

"No, I don't mean that, so it isn't necessary to stop and stare, Richard," responded Mr. Haughton, reproachfully. "But great things have happened at Redwoode this morning. The house is turned upside down and inside out with excitement. Mr. Kenneth is stand-

ing on his head—figuratively speaking, of course; Mr. Andrew Forsythe is uncertain whether his head is on or not; and Lady Redwoode is the happiest individual on the face of the earth."

"But what is the cause of all this commotion?"

"The arrival of Lady Redwoode's daughter."

"Lady Redwoode's daughter! She has no no daughter. What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say," was the response, Mr. Haughton evidently enjoying his nephew's amazement. "I called at Redwoode before I followed you to the Crown. Lady Redwoode was engaged, but Kenneth told me the strangest story ever listened to by mortal man. It seems that Lady Redwoode had been married before she wedded Lord Redwoode. Her first husband was an Englishman, living in India—a man of diverse accomplishments and personal comeliness, but, by profession, a simple, humble secretary. He was poor, of course, for rich men don't usually engage themselves as secretaries. There is no accounting for women, Richard, as you must know from experience, and so Lady Redwoode, then Miss Agatha Glinwick, married this man secretly, and had a daughter by him. He died before the daughter was born, and her sister-in-law, having a child born on the same day as Lady Redwoode's, took both babies as her own, giving out that they were twin sisters. Lady Redwoode was not long afterwards married to her late husband and came to England, so she never saw the child again until now. Mr. Glinwick is dead, and has sent his daughter and his sister's daughter to her ladyship, and she is making the most of them at the present moment."

"A strange story!" said the Baronet, in surprise.

"The strangest part is to come," returned Mr. Haughton, complacently, as if the peculiarity of the occurrence was due to him personally. "Mr. Glinwick was an unfeeling old man, with no more heart than that chimney-pot you see in the valley yonder. He lost his property, so his daughter was poor. He hadn't treated his sister well, so he thought she wouldn't make his child an heiress. In his dilemma, he resolved not to let Lady Redwoode know which girl belonged to her, so that she would be obliged to treat them both alike."

"What an infamous idea! Poor Lady Redwoode—"

"Oh, you needn't pity her! Women are curious beings, and mothers have an instinct that defies calculation. Lady Redwoode knew her daughter at once, from her resemblance to herself, I believe, and she has declared her to be the heiress of Redwoode, and introduced her to the household. They're having a grand time at Redwoode, I can tell you."

"And what does Mr. Forsythe say?"

"Delighted, of course. He'll very likely marry the heiress, as he is such a favourite with her ladyship. I wish I could have seen the two young ladies. But we shall see them in a few minutes, Richard, and I want to warn you first against falling in love with Miss Glinwick. She has Hindoo blood—indeed, her grandmother, a pure Hindoo, has come with them."

The Baronet again expressed his surprise, and lapsed into a reverie which his relative made no attempt to break. They resumed their ascent of the hill, and soon gained its summit, finding themselves in the deep shade of the wood, in the midst of which the mansion was situated. Continuing their way in thoughtful silence towards the dwelling, they at length came upon a lovely scene, which they had often visited with Lady Redwoode.

"I shall go no farther," said the Baronet, pausing abruptly. "I find I am not in the mood to talk nonsense to young ladies, or to sympathize with Lady Redwoode in her happiness. You can go on without me, Uncle William."

As he concluded he threw himself at full length upon the green sward, and looked moodily around him.

Overhead, the boughs of the trees united themselves in a pointed arch, through the interstices of which the sunbeams strayed, falling upon the short green grass beneath. At Sir Richard's feet the brook, that was hastening to encircle the base of the hill, fell in an exquisitely beautiful cascade, whose loud musical murmur rang through the grove to a considerable distance. The white foam, the glittering spray, looking in the sunshine like stray jewels, the murmur of the waters—all contributed to make the scene a fairylike one, and was full of sweet and tender soothing to a perturbed spirit. The young Baronet felt comforted, he scarce knew why, and a soft dreaminess stole over his soul that was inexpressibly delightful after his recent experiences.

Mr. Haughton looked at him for a moment doubtfully, then murmured something to the effect that he lacked courage to face the young strangers alone, and imitated his nephew's example, placing himself at a little distance, in a more secluded spot, there to await Sir Richard's pleasure.

The moments flew on, and still the young Baronet lay there in idle enjoyment of the scene. He looked upon the smiling valley, the distant sea, his own home, and the various features of the scenery, lulled by the song of the waterfall, and beguiled by the music of the birds. Once only his brow clouded with gloom, and that was when he beheld two riders galloping over the country road in the distance—riders whom his keen eyesight and keener instinct assured him were his divorced wife and her brother. Then his lip curled scornfully, his fair and noble face darkened, his blue eyes flashed fiercely as lightning through a summer sky, and his old moodiness seemed to creep over him like a black pall.

It was then that the summer breeze wafted to him a sound sweeter than the music of waterfall or birds—the sound of a fresh, sweet, exquisite voice, singing a tender little Hindoo song, the meaning of which he could understand, though the words were not comprehended by him. It came to him like a gentle wave of delicious harmony, soothing him like a spell, and thrilling his soul with strangely mingled pleasure and pain.

"An angel's voice!" he murmured, unconsciously.

It came nearer and nearer, and he began to distinguish in its undertones one of sorrow cheerfully borne. He heard, too, the sound of a gentle footfall approaching the waterfall, and would have beaten a retreat had he had time. But even while he meditated doing so the bushes framing in the little nook where he reposed were parted by a small white hand, and an angel's face looked in upon him with a faint expression of surprise.

Sir Richard feared to stir lest the vision should vanish, and looked at it in breathless admiration. He beheld in it the glorious embodiment of his vague dreams, the realization of his wildest, highest fancies. The sweet, spirited face, with its delicately dark complexion, and eyes of dark grey, amidst a mass of rippling hair, in which nestled a thousand shadows, was the loveliest he had ever beheld. He looked at her with a rapt countenance, and would have spoken but that he feared to frighten her like a half-tamed bird.

For a moment Hellice, for, as our reader knows, the lovely vision was no other than the rejected maiden, stood gazing with slightly parted lips at the handsome face and reclining figure of Sir Richard; then, with the colour deepening in her cheeks, she let fall the branches she held and flitted away through the shadow.

The Baronet made no attempt to arise and follow her, but his face had grown strangely bright and hopeful, a look which it did not lose even when thoughtfulness began to creep over it.

"That must be Lady Redwoode's daughter!" said Mr. Haughton, after a lengthened silence, and with a strange sigh. "How beautiful she is! She make one forget the past—"

"Yes, she does, Uncle William!" interrupted the Baronet, brightly, adding, in a lower tone, so as to be almost inaudible, "I must see her again. Whoever and whatever she is I recognise her as my fate!"

CHAPTER VII.

As letters some hand has invisibly traced,
When held to the flame will steal out of the sight;
So many a feeling that long seemed effaced
The warmth of a meeting like this brings to light.

—Moore.

For some minutes Sir Richard Haughton continued his reclining position in the green, shaded nook by the waterfall, hoping that the brief and lovely vision might return to him, but as it did not he at length arose, his heart continuing to thrill with those sweet and strange sensations which Hellice had so unconsciously evoked.

"Shall we go on to Redwoode?" asked his uncle, in a low tone, approaching him.

"Yes—no—not to-day," replied the young Baronet, arousing himself from his abstraction and glancing down at his plain morning dress. "We will make a formal call to-morrow, when Lady Redwoode will be better pleased to see us. So, that young lady is the daughter of the Baroness, is she?"

"Yes," declared Mr. Haughton, in a positive tone. "Her name is Avon—Miss Cecile Avon, I believe. Kenneth said Lady Redwoode's daughter was very beautiful, so this young lady must be her. I never dreamed of a being half so lovely! How foolish people are who brood over an early disappointment when such lovely creatures as Miss Avon exist," and he sighed deeply.

Sir Richard's fair face flushed as if the remark touched him nearly, and murmured, in reply:

"True, uncle. Why should anyone permit his life to be wrecked by a single memory? Why should the baseness of one individual cloud a whole existence, and make me blind to the purity, goodness, and beauty of another? I have been weak and foolish, but I will be no longer!"

His voice took a determined, resolute tone; his blue eyes flashed with a sudden determination, and his whole countenance became at once animated and resolved.

Mr. Haughton regarded him for a moment with a keen, suspicious glance, and then he said, drily:

"I see how it is, Richard. This pretty face has taken you captive. You had better wait until you see the other young lady before falling in love. The truth is," he added, hesitatingly, "I admire Miss Avon myself, and I am older than you, and so—"

A mirthful look shot through Sir Richard's eyes and glanced over his features as he said:

"I see, uncle, we are rivals in our admiration for this bright-faced young girl, whom we have seen but once, and who does not even know our names. She would be vastly amused could she overhear our conversation."

"Be it so, then, Richard—we are rivals," said his uncle, without heeding his concluding sentence. "But let us still be friends. I would rather relinquish at once all my plans of future happiness than that there should be any enmity or coldness between the two last members of our family. Let our rivalry be an amicable one, and let the one who gains the glorious prize still retain the friendship of the other. Shall it be so?"

He proffered his hand, and the Baronet accepted it with pretended gravity, although an amused smile flickered about his mouth.

"You have not considered the possibility, uncle, of the young lady's having already formed an attachment," he said, quietly. "But if she has not, and should smile upon

one of us, we will continue to be friends. Now, as we have conversed about this young stranger sufficiently, let us return home."

Mr. Haughton acceded to this proposition at once, muttering something about his inability to encounter those soft, dark eyes again that day, and the couple set out without delay for Sea View. The uncle was silent as they retraced their steps down the hill and proceeded across the fields, and Sir Richard was absorbed in strangely mingled reflections, from the midst of which, however, stood out the lovely, glowing face of Hellice like a clear-cut cameo.

The sweet vision accompanied him home to the solitude of his library, where, book in hand, he sat dreaming for hours—strange, sweet dreams, such as he had not known since his boyhood. For years his future had seemed to him clouded with dark shadows, but now hope irradiated those shadows with floods of rosy light, and he began to think that there might be happiness and love in prospect for him yet.

It was singular, he said to himself once or twice, that his brief glimpse of Hellice should have such an effect upon him that at first sight of her face an electric chord reaching to the innermost depths of his soul should have been touched and not yet ceased to vibrate—but he made no attempt to explain the fact to his own satisfaction. It was enough for him that he had seen her, and that the sight had power to move his heart as it had never been moved before, even by the unfortunate woman who had been for a single hour his honoured wife.

More than once, when plunged into a vague, delicious reverie, the last menacing words of Margaret Sorel forced themselves upon his remembrance, seeming like the sounds of sullen thunder in a sunny, summer's day—a warning of an approaching storm. He dismissed them, however, with a smile at his supposed folly, and returned to his intangible dreams.

The day passed, its flight unheeded by the young Baronet. He joined his uncle at dinner, and spent the evening with him in the drawing-room, but neither was in a conversational mood.

They separated at an early hour, and Sir Richard retired to his private apartments, to be visited there by dreams of Hellice and Margaret Sorel, from which he awakened at an early hour unrefreshed.

After breakfast, as the hour was too early for his proposed visit to Redwoode, he took his usual morning stroll about his home estate, going down by the sea, walking up and down the beach, sauntering through the park and gardens, and concluding, as usual, by directing his steps towards the ruined part of his dwelling.

These ruins were, as has been said, exceedingly picturesque. They were also extensive, considering that they had formed originally a private mansion. Many of the walls were still standing, covered with luxuriant ivy, and in some parts the floors were still in a good state of preservation. The roofs, however, were generally lacking; there were great pitfalls in some of the floors, and occasionally a rift in the wall served as a good loophole through which an excellent view was obtainable. A broad and stately staircase was in good preservation and led up to apartments where once beauty and gaiety held sway, and where now the bat and the owl made their homes, with the far-off blue of heaven for their only roof. These upper chambers, with their broken walls, forming in some places merely a sort of balustrade, commanding a magnificent view of the sea, and were a favourite resort of tourists and excursionists, as well as of their hermit-like owner.

As Sir Richard approached this part of the ruins, he saw, or fancied he saw, a girlish figure, with gay, fluttering drapery, flitting about the airy upper chamber, and after a moment settle itself upon a low piece of the wall, and turn its face towards the sea.

(To be continued.)

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

-:-:-

CHAPTER VII.

"AFTER the funeral Mrs. Rea sold the dye works and her house and everything, and we came here to Lonesome Lodge eighteen years ago, Miss Mona, and here we have been ever since. I think, myself, that all the trouble has afflicted the mistress's mind; for since we came here she has seen no visitors—she who was so fond of society, and everything like that.

"When we first came a few people called and that, but the door was shut in their faces; and then Miss Margaret was sent to a first-class school, and we were more lonely than ever. But that was afterwards; and now, miss, I am coming to your poor mamma."

"Yes," says Mona, in a low, husked voice. She has been listening with glistering eyes and rapt, intense face to Martin's story.

"Please go on, Martin."

"Well, my dear, we had been nearly a year at Lonesome Lodge, when one awful wild night—quite late in the afternoon, rather—a knock came to the door, and on the steps, in the rain and wet, who should stand but poor Miss Annie. It was I who answered the door, as the man-servant was out, and I was that terrified I couldn't speak.

"It is I, Martin," she said, poor child! 'Will my mother take me in? I have walked all the way, and—and—I—am dying, I think.'

"And your husband, Miss Annie?" I asked, and the poor thing burst into tears.

"Dead!" she moaned. 'He died in the poor house, Martin. He died because he could get no work, and he was starved, and then the fever—' she couldn't speak for crying, and her poor, thin, pinched face would make anyone sad.

"I wasn't the better of seeing her for a long time, what with the shock and everything—"

"Go on," interrupts Mona, drawing a long breath of deepest interest. "What happened then? Did grandmamma take her in?"

"No, Miss Mona, she did not, and Heaven forgive her. But I don't think she knew the condition poor Miss Annie was in, for it was nearly dark, and she had a shawl round her.

"I went to the mistress and told her as nicely as ever I could. But, my dear Miss Mona, I never saw such an unforgiving spirit. Without one word to me she got up and walked—with an awful, black, bitter look upon her face—right out to the hall door, without ever stopping once to think or look back; and I followed her, and she opened the door wide. What she said I do not know, but I heard poor Miss Annie cry out,—

"Mother, mother, have pity! But she slammed the door in her face and left her out in the storm and the rain; and I begged her and implored her to let poor Miss Annie in. I might as well have talked to the wind. But, oh! Miss Mona, it will break your heart when I tell you how the poor thing must have lain out all that night in the rain and the wind; and we could not have heard her crying, for the waves were roaring so loudly.

"But next morning, in an old outhouse lay Miss Annie—poor, pretty Miss Annie—quite dead, and all her troubles over; and you, miss, were lying alive beside her—a poor, tiny baby, only born a few hours!"

Mona bends down her head that Martin may not see the bitter tears rolling down her cheeks.

"My poor mother!" she whispers, in a smothered voice. "Oh, Martin, what a wretch my grandmother was!"

"She was, dear; a cruel hard woman. But I don't think she could have known about the baby coming, for she seemed surprised, and said, 'Whose baby?' when I told her. And I said to her, when I broke it to her as gently as ever I could, that Miss Annie would never

need help or shelter again, for she was dead, but the baby was living. And she gave one long, wailing cry, and then said,—

"What have I to do with John Waring's child?"

"But never another word would she say. Only when poor Miss Annie was laid in her coffin—such a poor, thin, starved thing she was, with her poor feet all out and bruised, and her long, brown hair hanging down, all wet with rain—Mrs. Rea came and looked at her for a long time; and in spite of her hard face and dry eyes I believe her heart was breaking. And no one could look at that poor, young, troubled face without sorrow. To see her, who had been the petted darling, I may say, dying like a dog, or an outcast—all alone.

"Don't cry, Miss Mona, don't, dear? Your poor mamma is in Heaven these many years. But I tell you that, night after night, I could not sleep for thinking of poor Miss Annie lying alone in her trouble, with not a soul to help her; and dying there, just because no one was by to care for her.

"Oh! it was a dreadful thing, and surely if anyone was ever haunted it should be the mistress, and haunted she is, I feel sure, by that dead face; and often for long after, I used to fancy I heard poor Miss Annie's voice calling out,—

"Mother, mother, have pity."

"And what happened to me?" asks Mona, lifting up a wet, distressed face.

"That was the strangest thing of all," replies Martin. "You disappeared, and at first I thought the mistress had done something to you. But one night she said to me, quite abruptly,—

"I have given the child out to nurse."

"And sure enough I found out afterwards that she had carried you herself, all across the mountain, and given you to a woman whose child had died, and had you christened. And then one day when you were about four—I don't suppose you remember it, miss—but the woman died, and the mistress fetched you herself and took you away to school, and we never heard tale or tidings of you till your grandmamma sent for you, when Miss Margaret was going to be married; and that is all, Miss Mona, every bit."

"Thank you, Martin," Mona says, gently. "I am glad you told me. I understand now why grandmamma dislikes me so much."

And Mona goes away, and out along the bleak shore, to think over the sad, wretched story of her mother's life, to brood over the still sadder story of that mother's death. And she thinks with passionate, useless resentment of her grandmother's cruelty and revenge, and sheds sorrowful tears over the tragic end of the poor young mother so long ago.

Suddenly, with the tears wet upon her cheeks, she comes face to face with Dr. Smith.

"Have you deserted your patient?" he asks, taking her unwilling hand in greeting.

"Martin is better," Mona answers, turning away her tear-stained face, and keeping it steadily averted. "I believe she is expecting you. I am going for a walk."

"Are you? May I not come for a walk too? Why have you been crying?" he asks, abruptly, and Mona turns two angry eyes towards him.

"I call that a very rude question, Dr. Smith!"

"And you won't tell me?"

"No," in a low, indignant voice.

"Are you not lonely here?" he asks, changing the subject. "Do you know it is very bad for you, moping so much along these dreary cliffs?"

"I do not find it bad for me."

Mona's tone is not friendly—it is absolutely rude. But Dr. Edward Smith is impervious to snubs. The idea that any woman, particularly a pretty one, should not care for his society never enters his head; and he thinks, nay, he is sure of it, that Mona avoids him for very fear that she might fall in love with

him, and that a strong feeling of loyalty to Margaret makes her hold him at arms' length, as it were.

He does not blame her a bit. He feels that no woman could resist him, and he wishes from the bottom of his heart that the forty-thousand pounds belonged to this girl instead of Margaret—this bewitching girl, who can be grave or gay, saucy and defiant, a different mood every hour—not always the same, like Margaret. Even now Mona looks more attractive than usual, with this angry light in her lovely eyes, and the tears upon her smooth cheeks.

Margaret enrages him when she cries—perhaps because her tears are no novelty; but Mona, with the quiver of her lip, and the hurt, grieved look on her face, she attracts him more than ever; and all of a sudden the thought leaps into his mind that perhaps *he* is the cause of these tears.

Her confusion on meeting him, her evident distress, her very anger, all point to one conclusion; and the blood races through every vein at the rate of a hundred miles an hour—all unwitting that Mona never sees him without a thrill of absolute loathing, never looks at him without thinking of the rabbits enduring a living death. He comes a step nearer, and takes her hand, which is promptly, immediately withdrawn.

"Have I anything to do with these tears?" he whispers, in the voice that captured Margaret's fancy,

Mona stares at him with blank, unaffected surprise.

"You, Dr. Smith? What on earth would I cry about you for?"

"Ah! I know," he whispers again; and then lower, "Mona, cannot we, at least, be friends?"

"Mona!" she repeats, with supreme indignation. "Since when did I give you leave to call me by my name? I think you will be late, and Martin will be waiting," she says, with a fine air of dismissal. "She says her arm was rather painful last night, but on the whole she is better," Mona proceeds, in a most businesslike manner.

"I don't want to see Martin," he says, irritably.

"But Martin wants to see you! She has been expecting you all the morning."

"But I want to talk with you," says Dr. Smith, throwing prudence and all to the winds.

"I am afraid I cannot return the compliment," Mona answers, lightly; "for I prefer walking by myself, and I left Margaret waiting for you to go to the village with her after you had seen Martin."

"Hang Margaret!" he says, and walks off in a rage.

While Mona, with a laugh, flies on with a quiet step over the short, springy grass that grows amongst the grey boulders, and at her left hand moans and tosses the wide sea.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WILD, prolonged cry for help goes echoing amongst the rocks, and moaning over the sea; and the cry is nearly drowned in the roar of the waves, and yet again and again the wail of a human soul in trouble goes sobbing out in vain appeal.

And there is none to hear. No human being is within hail on this desolate coast; the foot of man seldom treads the lonely shore.

The white gulls circle and whirl and shriek in concert, and settle again upon the rocks, only to start up again in myriads as the shout breaks forth again,—

"Help, help!"

Far away to the west the grey sky is rent, and the pale sunlight floods the troubled sea, and gilds the rocks and white foam with radiance, and flashes on the white breasts of the birds.

Soon the sun will have set, and the scene will

be cold, and Mona looks at it with some of the golden light caught and held prisoner as it were in her eyes, as she slowly proceeds on her homeward way, a little weary, having walked farther than usual to-day, and the heavy black mountain beneath which nestles Lonsome Lodge is out of sight.

A moaning wind comes like a sigh over the water; the pale gleams of sunlight flicker and change and fall, trembling on land and sea. And with the sighing breeze comes again that despairing cry. And Mona stops and listens, and thinks at first it must be the sea birds. And then they rise and fly in circles, and their discordant cries fill the air. And Mona stands, a tall silent figure, with the evening light upon her face, and listens. Yea, again a cry for help breaks with a suddenness upon her ear. And she, looking around, above, anear, can discern no one in search of assistance.

Not another human being beside herself is visible. There is nothing between her and the pale western sky but the long rocky shore—nothing on the one hand but the wide, bleak expanse of moorland, where the shrill reeds whistle so low, and on the other the tumbling, foaming sea, with the sunlight brightening the troubled surface of the waters.

But surely that was a cry for help? Mona moves on a few steps, pauses, and listens intently again.

Yes, there it is again; and the sound is carried away and away, and dies out over the sea. It seems to come just from under the cliffs, a little way on in front, and Mona, fleet of foot, speeds on, and pauses, as the cry seems to come up just from under her feet.

Peering over the cliff, far down, she can see the figure of a man close to the rocks; and with a cry of "I am coming!" Mona proceeds to hasten down a most breakneck path, and at a breakneck pace, scrambling down the face of the cliff, grasping bunches of reedy grass and jutting stones in her descent, till she alights on the narrow strip of sand where the waves are nearly washing up to the face of the cliff.

So far, indeed, the tide is in that one wave, more venturesome than its fellows, comes creeping with a rush; silently, and washes over Mona's feet as she runs along the sands to where a tall figure stands immovable, apparently pinned to the rock.

"Are you alone?" he asks, as Mona reaches him breathless; and she can see that his hand and arm are imprisoned in a fissure in the rocks, and that his forehead is damp with his struggles to escape.

"Yes, I am all alone."

"Then I fear it is no use," he says, breathing hard. "You couldn't help me, and my arm and hand are caught like a vice in here. See!" tugging desperately, with his teeth set, and great beads of agony breaking out on his brow, "it is wedged tight, and no mortal power can get it out."

"But how did it get there?" Mona asks, looking pitifully at his frantic efforts.

"My dog went in here—a tiny fox terrier—and he stuck, and I shoved in my arm to help him out, and the whole thing slipped, or something, but I am jammed between two rocks, and can't budge."

"Perhaps I could help you?" Mona says, with alacrity. "You see, you have only one hand, and perhaps I could loosen some of the earth."

"Thanks; you are very kind." And then the grim humour of the thing strikes him, and he laughs.

"What a fool I look pinned to this infernal rock. I beg your pardon, but tugging at one's arm for an hour is not improving to the temper."

"Does it hurt you?"

Mona is working industriously at the sandy face of the cliff.

"Yes, it hurts a good deal. I fancy I have half smashed my wrist hauling at it, and poor Dandie, I imagine, has been smothered; he hasn't cried now for a good bit."

They are very hopeful at first. Mona

burrows away cheerfully till her cheeks are scarlet, and her hands bleeding.

They laugh and talk these two quite naturally, as they work indefatigably. He tells her his name is Rex Challoner; that he is the brother of the clergyman of the parish, and he has just come on a visit.

And Mona also tells him her name; and then for awhile both work in silence, and it dawns upon them that they are making no progress.

"I will try another haul," and he grinds his teeth together, and hauls with a vengeance.

"Oh, it must hurt you terribly! Oh, stop!" cries Mona, as his brown face turns livid with pain, and he leans against the cliff utterly exhausted. And then for the first time his courage wavers a little.

"Perhaps if you went for help," he suggests, looking at the soft face, all flushed with excitement and pity.

"There is no one near," Mona answers. "I would have to go miles before getting near the house, and—"

A sudden fear sends all the colour out of her face.

"The tide is coming in!"

"So it is!" and his face rivals hers in its sudden pallor.

The water is creeping up inch by inch and yard by yard. Involuntarily they both look up and see high-water mark just above his head, and the man's face grows grim and stern.

"Will it come in quickly?" he asks.

And Mona answers trembling,—

"Yes. It always runs in very fast."

And then, without speaking, they set to work again in real, dreadful earnest, till their breath comes in sobs, and then suddenly they feel the water about their feet.

"You must leave me," he whispers. "You can do no good, and you must not put yourself in danger."

And as she looks up with steadfast eyes, and only shakes her head and continues her laborious task of boring into the cliff, a thought creeps into Rex Challoner's mind that makes it hard to die.

"You must go," he urges, his grim face very grave and stern. "And, perhaps, you know, you might meet some one to come and help."

"I could meet no one," Mona answers, pale and determined. "Look how far I have got in!"

"Yes, but it is no use. Oh, Heaven! it is hard to die like this!" and his great frame heaves, and his lip trembles.

Another wave washes in, and rushes back with a roar, but they are wet to their knees. Another desperate struggle for life, till a cry of agony breaks from between his clenched teeth, as he hauls, and pulls, and writhes.

"I can't try any more!" he gasps, and leans his head wearily against the cliff, while a great tear rolls slowly over his cheek. "It is all up with me. I am to be drowned," with his free hand wiping away the tear.

And Mona works away in a frenzy, though her hands are bleeding, and she feels that all her weak, girl's arms can do are as nothing. She does not cry—will not cry—while there is anything that can be done to save him. She will not think of that awful moment when she may have to leave him to drown by inches.

"I will stay by him to the last!" she thinks, and steals a glance at the imprisoned giant. Tall, and broad he is, with a rough, kindly face, and her heart is full of pity, as she desperately tears away at the sand and gravel.

"Take my watch and things, will you; and you will tell my sister, Mrs. Challoner, how it happened?" speaking huskily. "And I thank you from my heart for what you have done."

"You mustn't give up hope!" cries Mona, desperately, as the water washes round them, and the twilight is settling over the sea.

"Ah! I have it!" he shouts. "I wonder I didn't think of it before. I will cut it off!"

With a thrill of horror Mona sees him fumbling for his knife.

"Open it," he says. "Quick; no, I have it," forcing open the blade with his teeth.

"Oh, no!" Mona shrieks, turning wildly towards him. "You are not going to cut off your arm?" her white face staring at him.

"It is my only chance, if I only have the pluck," he says, with desperate determination. "You must go away, though; it won't be a pleasant sight."

"No! no! no!" shrieks the girl, beside herself with fear and excitement, as he turns up his sleeve with his one hand, still holding the knife between his teeth. And with a thrill she sees his bare, white arm, where the veins stand out like knotted cords.

"It is my only chance," he says, very low. "I dare say I shan't succeed; but, oh, it needs courage to die a death like this!" looking with a convulsed face and working throat at his bare arm. "I haven't the pluck," he moans, and leans his forehead shuddering against the rock. "And what wouldn't I give for a glass of water?" turning his troubled eyes on Mona. "I feel it is all up with me."

With a little splash the knife falls into the water.

"I will try no more," Rex Challoner says, and looks gloomily out over the racing waves. "And you must leave me now, and promise not to wait for the end. See, that last wave was up to your waist!"

"I won't leave you," Mona answers, sobbing. "And you must help me too."

"It is no good!" he says, looking sorrowfully at her, the last human face he shall ever see, and it seems dim to him. Oh! strange bitterness of grim fate, that on the day of his death should come this girl with the hazel eyes, to mock him with a faint shadowy "what might have been!"

Vaguely he looks back on his past life, all the useless, wasted years. How they crowd upon him now in a motley crowd; faces of friends and foes, all pouring in upon his memory! And yet, through all, not one woman's face comes to his recollection—not one. Surely he must be getting partly unconscious!

He comes back to the bitter reality to hear the sound of many waters in his ears, to feel the cold night breeze blowing about him. "This must be the end," he thinks, coming back to agony of the moment with a sob. "And I am left alone to die!"

It is cold—bitterly cold; the waves come washing and lapping about him. Soon—soon, they will be washing his poor, dead body to and fro.

"She has left me," he thinks, dimly. "She did her best; she was a brave girl. Oh, Heaven, it is hard to die! Lord have mercy—"

But what glad cry is this that breaks upon his dulled senses?

"Now, pull, pull! I have loosened the rock!" And two eager hands have closed round his arm, while the clear, young voice keeps calling, "Quick, quick. You are saved!"

Almost unconsciously he struggles, panics, struggles again; and she helps him, and suddenly his poor, maimed hand is withdrawn, and he is free.

"Now," cries the girl's voice, bravely, "you mustn't faint. Quick, give me your hand; this way, come!"

"I have to thank you for saving my life!"

In spite of himself his teeth chatter as he speaks. He feels cold and exhausted, and the pain of his arm is very great. Together they stand on the summit of the cliff, far below the hungry waves leap and roar; and it is getting very dark. Now that the strain and excitement and danger is over, Mona is very silent.

She has guided him step by step up the cliff, cheering and encouraging him, and now in silence she stands, and can find no words to answer when he thanks her for saving his life.

"You are cold and wet," he says, "and all on my account!" touching her dress with his unurt hand. "How bravely you worked! Only for you I should have been dead by now," and his voice is very solemn in its grave gentleness. He stands a tall, dark figure between her and the shadowy sky; they are both smothered and upset after their strange adventure. Mona shivers, and Mr. Challoner takes himself to task.

"You mustn't stand shivering here," he says, briskly, shaking himself together. "It is my turn to look after you now, and the first thing is, where are we, and in which direction does your home lie?"

Mona points away towards the darkness. "It is over there; but I think your arm will have to be seen to first. Do you know the way to Dr. Smith's?"

"No. I only arrived yesterday, and distinguished myself as you saw this afternoon. I am sorry for the dog, too. He was a favourite."

"Yes, it was a pity; but I am sure he was smothered when the rock slipped," Mona answers, and then a little shyly, "Shall I show you the way to Dr. Smith's?"

"But would it not be taking you out of your way? And I would really far rather that you got home and changed your wet things. You must be perished!"

"No, we will go to the doctor first," decidedly, "and I daresay he will drive you home in his wag. Your arm must be hurting you dreadfully!"

"'Tis torn a bit."

He conceals from her the torture he is enduring, the throbbing, burning pain of his bruised and lacerated wrist and arm, wrenched and torn as it had been in the many ineffectual efforts at freedom.

"Then come," Mona says, simply, and leads the way, and he can see that she walks wearily.

"I feel so ashamed of myself, Miss Waring, giving you all this bother, when you must be dead tired," he remarks, as their turn their backs on the sea, and set their faces towards the silent darkness of the moorlands.

"I don't mind," Mona answers, brightly, with a laugh. "I am used to walking, and I am not very tired."

Not very tired! Her voice is weary even, and he has to moderate his pace to hers.

"Are you sure we are going right?" he asks once, as they emerge on a long road that seems to lead to nowhere in the shadowy gloom.

"Oh, yes; this is the way to Dr. Smith's." She had walked there once with Margaret; that was before she knew of the experiments on living animals.

Mr. Challoner has bound his handkerchief round his wrist. It is burning and throbbing, painfully, and the blood keeps dropping down over his fingers.

Every now and again Mona thinks of his bare white arm, in its great muscular strength, and the moment when with his knife he had been tempted to try and hack through flesh and bone in that dreadful struggle for life.

She will never forget that moment, not the horror of it, and that other dreadful time, when he lay half unconscious, and the waves were sweeping and swirling round, nearly carrying her off her feet, as with a strength she had never thought she possessed, she tore away at the sand, and with an effort that seemed hardly human, wrenched upon the rocks that had slipped and held him prisoner.

Only just in time; another five minutes, and she could have done nothing further, only left him to drown.

"I once heard of a man, and a ship heeled over on his leg," Mr. Challoner says, and his thoughts are also on the last dreadful hour. "And the tide was coming in, and they could do nothing. I often thought it would have been right to have knocked that poor fellow on the head when safety was hopeless. I thought of that this afternoon."

"And was he drowned?"

"Yes. Shrieking and struggling to them to save him; to the last, I know what he must have felt. Only for you, and you were so brave and plucky, I would have been out of the world by now. I feel that I can never, never thank you half enough!" bending his head a little to look down at the girl's face, "I hope we shall be great friends," he goes on, wondering a little who Mona can be.

"Here is Dr. Smith's."

They have reached a white gate, and can see the form of a house standing amongst some trees. Mona leads the way up the gravel path, and their summons for admission is answered promptly.

Dr. Smith is at home, and they are shown into the drawing-room, where Dr. Smith is ensconced, bachelor-fashion, with a pipe in his mouth, sitting by the fire reading the paper.

"Mona!" he calls out in astonishment, snatching out his pipe and rising to his feet. And Mona speaks quickly.

"This gentleman, Mr. Challoner, has met with an accident, and I have brought him to you," drawing back a little to leave Rex Challoner to explain for himself, which he does with such warm praise for Mona's courage that the girl's cheeks grow hot.

"You are quite a heroine!"

Dr. Smith keeps his eyes on Mona's face with a smile.

"I never heard anything like it; quite like a scene out of a novel, I can tell you, sir," turning to Challoner. "You had a very narrow escape—the tide runs in there like a mill race."

"Yes. Only for Miss Waring I should have been drowned."

And a pair of frank, manly eyes, looking out from a face not exactly handsome, but brave and honest, answers Mona's shy glance with a glow of thanks. And Dr. Smith, seeing the look, and taking umbrage at the fine proportions and well-set up figure of the man Mona has saved, wishes that Rex Challoner had been left to the fishes. But he is not so ill-bred as to express these wishes aloud.

These thoughts belong to his inner self—his inner mind—that feasts itself on Mona's beauty. His outward man, the man who is engaged to Margaret, speaks quite affably.

"You must come to my surgery, Mr. Challoner, and I will look after your wounds with pleasure," and wheeling round, the chair he had himself been sitting in to the fire, he turns to Mona.

"Sit here by the fire, and I will order some tea. Why, your dress is quite wet!"

"Yes," says Mr. Challoner, with much concern. "The water came up pretty high, and I am so afraid she will take cold. Why not let this arm of mine alone, and get Miss Waring home?"

"I will take her home after, but she must have the tea—or coffee would be better."

"Thank you, I do not want anything," Mona answers, stiffly, resenting indignantly a sudden pressure of Dr. Smith's hand over hers.

"Well, but you must have the coffee whether you want it or no, and Mr. Challoner will have some too. Now, sir, please, this way."

Mona just waits till she hears the surgery door slam, and then takes her departure, wondering, as she hastens down the gravel path and closes the iron gates behind her, where does he keep the rabbits—in which of the rooms are they enduring a living death!

CHAPTER IX.

THE Rev. John Challoner and his wife have not many ideas beyond their own Rectory and their few parishioners, and it is lucky for them that they are so contented, for other attractions on this sea-girt coast there are none. They are quite happy in each other's companionship, and with the children

as an ever-increasing source of amusement and anxiety.

Six wild, hardy little Challoners are there growing up, brown, merry and strong.

"Young savages!" Nellie Challoner calls her children, and laughs not quite happily as she says so.

She would like to have them well dressed and well taught, but that is impossible, so the clothes are rough and strong, and suit the rocks and the seashore, and the learning is of the most desultory fashion, but they are cheerful, happy little imps, full of life and mischief.

There is the usual scene of mirth and merriment going on in the Rectory this evening—the evening on which Rex Challoner meets with his accident.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Challoner sits with the baby on her lap, and her matronly young face all smiles, for baby has cut a tooth successfully, making no fuss about it, as behoves a sixth child, who couldn't possibly expect the same amount of interest to be taken in his teeth as if he were No. 1, or even No. 2.

The Reverend John, to the imminent danger of his clerical knees, has transformed himself into a horse, and on his long back two young Challoners sit astride—rosy-faced, bare-legged youngsters, shrieking and laughing most uproariously.

"Mr. and Mrs. Challoner believe firmly in the virtue of the song that says:—

"Between the dark and the daylight,
When the clouds are beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupation,
That is known as the children's hour."

And the hour is a sacred institution, when books and work are laid aside, and a real hearty game is the order of the moment; or perhaps when the romp is over, the mother will gather the little ones round her and tell them a story so full of entrancing interest and so marvelously suitable to all intellects, that even the very wee ones listen with open mouths.

And maybe, in after years, these children will look back to the fireside romps and twilight stories as the very happiest time of all their lives.

No after pleasure of grown-up years will quite come up to the keen, fresh interest of mother's stories.

But once the stories are over, the game ended, and the room all put to rights again, the little ones go off to the nursery. And by-and-by six happy little white-robed figures are tucked up in bed, and little voices flap out the dear old hymn:—

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night!"

And then a great peace reigns in the Rectory, and the Rector and his wife can enjoy each other's society.

But there is high revel in the Rectory to-night.

It is Reggy's birthday, Uncle Rex's godson, and Uncle Rex has been invited to tea, to partake of the birthday cake, and to drink weak tea poured out by the children's own selves.

It is very nearly tea time, and Uncle Rex hasn't turned up.

"I call it mean—absolutely mean!" declares the hero of the feast. "When a fellow is asked to a party, it is positive bad manners not to turn up in time."

Poor Uncle Rex! Little they knew that this very moment he is held prisoner by the rocks, waiting for the tide to rise and drown him.

"I wonder where he is?" remarks Nellie, placidly joggling the baby with a practised hand.

There always is a baby at the Rectory.

The Reverend John dislodges the youngsters off his back suddenly, and gets up from the floor.

"Now, you young fry, I have played quite enough. Run and see if Uncle Rex is coming."

But there is no sign of Uncle Rex, and after



[A GOOD SAMARITAN.]

waiting a few minutes to give him law, hunger overcomes the children's good manners, and a general stampede to the schoolroom is made, where the feast is laid out, and the birthday cake, a triumph of mother's love, all decorated and iced, graces the centre of the table.

"What a pity Uncle Rex isn't here!" is the cry.

Mr. Challoner insults the young fry by remarking slyly that Uncle Rex has very likely kept out of the way on purpose.

"Then," cries Regy, who, being the birthday king, is privileged to act as host in general, and cut the cake, "I call it downright mean, I do."

But, mean or not mean, the tea is over, the cake demolished, all but one little slice, which sweet little Nell puts by for the defaulting Uncle Rex; and the delinquent never puts in an appearance, not even to tell that story of a real tiger fight which he promised he would do after the little ones had gone to bed.

And Uncle Rex goes down in the children's estimation to zero. But when it gets near dinner time, and he does not appear, it gets to be a little beyond a joke.

"He must have lost his way," suggests Mrs. Challoner, coming down after seeing the last of her flock to bed. "What do you think, John?"

"I think, my dear, that Rex is very well able to take care of himself."

"But he knew we dined at half-past seven. I told him so, and he might have come in time."

Mrs. Challoner is a wee bit put out at her household laws being set at naught. Men never understand these things. They will come tearing in half-an-hour late, and then expect to find everything as nice as usual.

Mrs. Challoner thinks of her nice little filleted sole, prepared by her own hands, and the cutlets, and all the little extra good dishes prepared in honour of their visitor. For the Rector's wife is a splendid manager, and understands the art of making much out of

little, and of making that little go as far as possible. And the Rectory dinner-table is always as pretty as bright glass and silver and flowers can make it. While, if there is only mutton chops, they are of the very best.

But the Rev. John Challoner never knows of all the thought and care and trouble taken by his wife to have these nice, tempting little dinners. So now, looking at the little cloud on her brow, he says—

"I think, Nellie, you are a little unreasonable; half-an-hour more or less can make very little difference. Dinner can be kept hot."

"Kept hot!"

Mrs. Challoner, like many bright busy people, can be rather peppery when she likes, and the amount of half-laughing scorn and contempt she manages to throw into those two words, "Kept hot!" is marvellous.

"Of course, if Rex has to put up with cold soup and tough, sodden fish, I can't help it," she says, with a little aggrieved air.

"How long are we to wait for dinner, John?"

"Oh, dear, I don't know. Give him half-an-hour's law, and if he doesn't turn up I must go and look for him."

But suddenly the object of their discussion enters the room, full of apologies, and with his arm in a sling, and Mrs. Challoner forgets her soup, and her filleted sole, and everything, in her excitement at her brother-in-law's appearance.

"What has happened?"

And he tells them in his slow, deliberate, way, which makes Nellie furious—she is so anxious to hear the end of the story.

And by the time it is told, and their wonder, gratitude and sympathy expressed, the dinner is announced. And Rex has to tell his story over and over again, while Mrs. Challoner cuts up his dinner for him with a practised hand, being well accustomed to chop up for the children.

"What a brave girl! I wonder who she is?" she cries, as he tells again of Mona's

heroism. "She ought to get a medal from the Humane Society. John, you must see about it; but who can she be?"

"I thought you would be sure to know. She must be one of your parishioners."

"What is she like?"

"I hardly know," he answers, hesitatingly, and with reluctance—which is hardly truthful on his part, for Mona's face is stamped upon his mind. "She is rather tall, I think, and—and—I should say a nice-looking girl, rather out of the common."

"That conveys nothing. Was she well-dressed? Was she a lady?"

"A lady," with the indignant crimson rushing over his face; "of course she was a lady, and as to dress, I suppose she was got up very like everyone else. I know that if she had not stood by me I shouldn't be here tonight, Nellie. Do you know, John, it makes a man feel very strange to have been so near death."

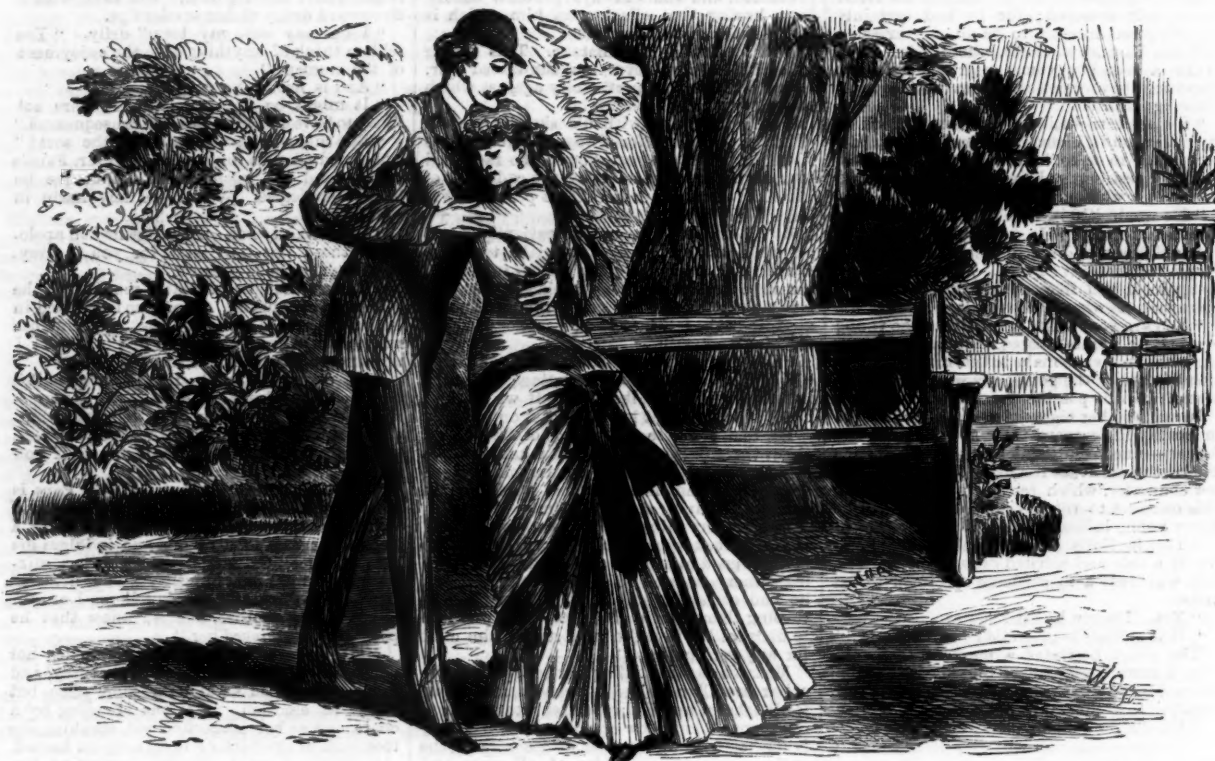
"Aye, she must be a brave girl!" and John Challoner's face is grave. "We must find out who she is, Nellie," looking at his wife.

"Yes, leave that to me," answers Nellie, nodding her head. "I will find out who your divinity is, Rex, but I don't know of any people living here of the name of Waring."

(To be continued.)

IODINE, hitherto known in nature only in combination with other elements, is now found in a free state in the water of Woodhall Spa, near Lincoln in England. The water is coloured a decided brown by the iodine.

The French ambassador to the English Court paid a neat compliment, a little while back, to a peeress who had been taking to him for an hour. The lady said, "You must think I am very fond of the sound of my own voice." The Frenchman replied, "I knew you liked music."



[MEETING HER FATE.]

NOVELETTE.]

SOME DAY.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

It was the first of May—such a May day as poets write of, and their readers are forced, as a rule, to take on trust. A day of perfect sunshine, blue skies, soft warm air, balmy with the breath of flowers that were springing up in all sorts of likely and unlikely places, and yet with a certain freshness in the atmosphere that only comes with the youngest and fairest daughter of the seasons.

Brentwood Park looked its best, and the old house, with its ivies and lichens, its carved oak doorway, and deep oriel windows made a picture pretty enough to delight the heart of any artist.

Claudia Brent, its young mistress, turned back to look at it once or twice as she sauntered slowly along the park, and towards a little plantation of young larches, whose foliage of freshest, tenderest green, was gently swaying about in the light breezes.

But if the house made a pretty picture, the young girl herself made a far prettier, with her blue eyes and yellow hair, which, unconfined, fell in long, sunbright tresses below her waist; and her white dress, and large, broad-brimmed hat set off her beauty to the greatest advantage.

In her hand she carried a basket, which she intended filling with primroses, but which, at the present moment, she was swaying idly about to and fro.

Heart-whole and fancy-free was Claudia, for only eighteen summers had passed over her head, and as yet she had not been presented at Court, and all her life had been spent at Brentwood, where, as Sir Everard Brent's only daughter and heiress, she was treated like some young princess, on whose path only rose leaves must be strewn.

As she reached the plantation, secure in the belief that no one was likely to hear her, she broke into a song,—

"Some day—some day I shall meet him,
I know not when or how."

She left off suddenly, and with a little scream—for a huge St. Bernard dog had sprung out from the bushes, so abruptly that she was completely taken by surprise, and for the moment was conscious of something very like fear.

"Rollo! Come here, sir!" cried a masculine voice, in sharp tones of authority, and a second later, a tall, good-looking young man stood before her, raising his hat with very palpable admiration in his eyes. "I beg your pardon—will you accept my apologies on my dog's behalf? I am sure he did not mean to alarm you."

"How can you be sure of it?" asked Claudia, with a smile, for she had now quite recovered her self-possession.

"Because I know him well enough to answer for him," returned the young man, with a responsive smile. "He is the most gallant dog in existence, and would not willingly annoy a lady for the world, would you, Rollo?"

Rollo wagged his tail in instant approval of his master's words, and looked up into Claudia's face, as much as to say, "Indeed, it is quite true!"

"Beg the lady's pardon!"

The dog put up his paw, and shook his head sadly, as if with deep contrition.

"He is a beautiful creature!" said Claudia, accepting the proffered paw, and patting him with her other hand, while the young man picked up the basket which she in her fright had dropped. "Is he old or young?"

"He has just completed his fourth year, so one can hardly call him a puppy. He is the greatest friend I possess in the world, and goes everywhere with me—even when I am trespassing, as is, I fear, the case at the present

moment. The fact is, however, I was so much struck by the splendid view one gets of the house just here that I was tempted to make a sketch."

"A sketch of Brentwood!" repeated Claudia, with some excitement, and quite unconscious that there was anything wrong in staying and talking thus to a perfect stranger. "Pray let me see it."

"Certainly. I shall be only too delighted to show it you," he returned, with alacrity; and he picked up a sketch-book which Claudia now perceived had been lying on the ground close to a moss-covered tree trunk that was stretched across the path.

"Oh, how pretty!" she exclaimed, enthusiastically, as she saw the picture of the old house, with the sunshine falling on its time-wrought beauties. "But it has taken you more than this morning to do all this?"

"Yes," in slight confusion. "I commenced it yesterday."

"Then you are an artist?"

"I call myself one," modestly.

"I wish I could paint like that!" murmured the young girl. Then a sudden idea seemed to strike her, and she said quickly, "Have you any other sketches with you?"

"Yes—one or two. I will show them to you if you like."

She assented eagerly, and seated herself on the tree-trunk, while he knelt beside her, and exhibited the contents of his portfolio.

"They are nearly all pictures of country houses," she observed, in some surprise.

"Yes. I am making a series of sketches of English mansions, which are to be brought out presently by a London firm of fine art publishers," he replied, "by which," with a smile, at once proud and sad, "you will understand that I work for my living."

"And are you going to put our house amongst these?"

"Your house?" in some surprise.

"I mean my father's—he is Sir Everard Brent, and I am his daughter," replied

Claudia, with perfect simplicity, and the artist looked half annoyed; for he had certainly not supposed himself to be in conversation with the Baronet's heiress, whom he imagined to be a haughty young patrician, far too grand to take any notice of a casual acquaintance like himself.

"I wished to include Brantwood Park in my collection if I could obtain Sir Everard's permission to do so," he returned, in answer to her question. "I intended writing and asking him whether he would object."

"He would like it," declared Claudia, with a confident nod. "He is very proud of our dear old home, and it will please him for other people to admire it as well. I will tell him I met you if you like, and then he will feel more interest when you write."

"You are very kind," murmured the young man, slightly embarrassed, and hardly knowing what answer to make to this magnanimous offer uttered by the young girl with the prettiest naïveté it is possible to imagine.

In spite of her eighteen years, Claudia was in reality little more than a child; for her father—unconventional himself—had done his best to cultivate the natural simplicity of her character, which formed such an agreeable contrast to the artificial manners of so many young ladies of to-day.

"This is Rollo, isn't it?" she asked, holding up a bold and spirited drawing of the dog, who was truly a magnificent specimen of his tribe.

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"It is splendid—splendid!" she repeated.

The artist hesitated a moment, then said, with a certain amount of diffidence—as if he did not feel quite sure whether he was right in yielding to a sudden impulse—

"Would you honour me by accepting it?"

"Do you mean you will give it me for my own? Oh, that is kind of you! Thank you very much!"

There was not a shade of awkwardness or consciousness in her lovely, lustrous eyes, as she lifted them to his, neither did she make any attempt to conceal the pleasure his present gave her.

Every moment made the young man more interested in her. She seemed to him the fairest and sweetest specimen of womanhood it had ever been his good fortune to meet, and yet there was something in her very innocence which no man would dare take advantage of, and which protected her as well as all the barriers society has raised to hedge round its votaries.

She rose from her mossy seat with a half-regretful sigh. Now that she had seen all the sketches there seemed nothing else to stay for, and yet she was conscious of enjoying her little while with this stranger, and feeling rather loth to go away. But she had one more question to ask before taking her departure.

"Is this your name?" pointing to his signature on the outside of the portfolio.

"Lionel Fane." "Yes," he rejoined, and then Claudia made him a little bow, and disappeared in the plantation, making her way towards one particular glade where she knew, by experience, the primroses grew most luxuriantly.

For some time after she left him Lionel stood in exactly the same attitude, looking after her, and trying to recall every word she had uttered, and bring back to his memory the soft music of her voice as she said good-bye. Some words of Shakespeare's recurred to his mind.

"He never loved who loved not at first sight!"

Either, artist though he was, Fane had been rather sceptical with regard to the power of feminine charms, so far as he himself was concerned.

He had seen many lovely women during his travels, and while confessing their beauty had found himself quite unmoved by it, and had come to the conclusion that there must be something lacking in his nature which had

prevented, and would always prevent, beauty from having that effect upon him which it seemed to have on other men.

Now he found his mistake. This young girl, with her azure eyes, and sun-kissed hair, haunted him with a pertinacity against which he was powerless to struggle.

He tried to go on with his sketch, but the effort was fruitless, for always before his eyes there floated that sweet, flower-like face, and ever in his ears there rung the cadence of her voice—more musical than a peal of silver bells.

At last he got up impatiently, and gathered his sketching materials together, deciding that it was quite useless to try and continue working any longer, since it was perfectly clear that he was not in the mood to do anything save fall into reveries concerning his morning's adventure.

"Come on, Rollo!" he said to the dog. "We will go back to our cottage, and then take a long—long walk, and see if we can get rid of the spell that has been cast on us."

He had come to the village of Brantwood about three days ago, and had taken a couple of rooms in a tiny house, whose picturesque appearance and flower-covered porch had, in the first instance, attracted him.

The country all round was very lovely, and it had struck him that he would be able to make a good many sketches of the surrounding scenery, as well as of the Park itself, but he had certainly not bargained for the disturbing element of a girl's charming presence to distract his thought, and render him unfit for any serious work!

Meanwhile, after filling her basket with the primroses, Claudia had returned home in time for luncheon, and had gone first into the morning-room—a long, low apartment, charmingly furnished with numerous arm-chairs of the puffy species, with tables of all sizes and shapes and descriptions, with dwarf book-cases filled with Claudia's favourite volumes, and with pots, and vases, and baskets of flowers in every conceivable place.

Claudia loved flowers, and was never happy unless she was surrounded by them; and as the gardens and conservatories of the Park were very extensive she was enabled to gratify her taste.

The only person at present in the room, was a woman of about forty—tall, stately, and with a face that was still beautiful, although it bore the marks of deep sorrow, and a yet deeper pride. This was Pauline Brent, the Baronet's only sister, and the actual mistress of the house.

Strangers, who saw her for the first time, often wondered why she had not married, and declared themselves fascinated by the perfect, statuesque beauty of her features, and the long-lashed loveliness of her large grey eyes; but the inhabitants of Brantwood could have told a tale of a past romance which had made Miss Brent's hair grow grey in a single week, and had brought the strange, strained look on her face that had never since left it—they did not wonder at her remaining single.

"Auntie!" cried Claudia, putting down her basket of flowers, and throwing off the broad, brimmed hat. "I have had an adventure this morning, and it has quite excited me. I met such a handsome young man in the plantation, and look what he has given me!"

She exhibited her sketch, which Miss Brent just glanced at, and then put down.

"I am afraid, Claudia, you are rather too wild to be allowed to wander about alone much longer," she said. "I don't know who 'the handsome young man' is to whom you allude may be, but it is certainly not proper for you to make acquaintance with strangers, even on your father's own estate."

The young girl's face clouded. She had come home in the highest spirits, and anxious to tell all that had happened between herself and Fane, and it was a little disappointing to be met with remonstrances at this early stage of her narrative.

"I never thought anything at all about the

impropriety, auntie, dear," she said, with a downward droop of her scarlet lips.

"I dare say not, my love," drily. "You seldom think of anything save the enjoyment of the moment."

"And is not that enough?"

"It might be, if the enjoyment were not likely to have disagreeable after consequences."

"But this will have nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Claudia, impatiently. "Mr. Fane's dog jumped out upon me, and of course he had to apologise. Was there any harm in that?"

"No, certainly not. But after he had apologised there was no reason for you to stay. You ought to have gone on."

"I never thought of that," murmured the girl, with contrition. "I was so interested in his sketches. He is an artist, and he has made such a pretty picture of the Park; I am sure papa will like to see it."

"Of course he will if you praise it," observed Miss Brent, with a slightly disagreeable smile. "You know very well that whatever you say he agrees with—that, in fact, you can twist him round your finger if you choose."

"Oh, auntie dear, don't say that! Papa is the very nicest and best of fathers, and I won't bear a word against him. Of course, I know he is very fond of me, and indulges me shamefully—Claudia's voice became a mixture of triumph and humility—"but after all it is quite natural, for people tell me I am the image of my mother, and we know that he positively worshipped her."

Miss Brent's face grew very pale—not white, but a stinging sort of ashen grey, and her lips quivered as if with some deep, but repressed emotion. She was standing by a chair, and as her niece finished speaking she took hold of the back of it to support herself.

"Auntie!" cried Claudia, springing forward in some alarm. "What is the matter? Are you going to faint?"

"Nonsense!" pushing her away rather roughly. "What can have put such a foolish idea in your head?"

"Because you looked like it."

"A passing giddiness, that is all."

"Does it distress you to hear me talk of my mother? I have noticed several times, when I have spoken of her, that you grew pale and looked strange."

"Naturally it distresses me," was the low-toned answer. "It was a great trouble to all of us when she died."

"But it is a long while ago—seventeen years!"

"Yes, but grief lasts for ever!" returned Miss Brent, with a passion of pain in her voice, and as she spoke she clasped her hands across her bosom as if she would try to still the wild beating of her heart. "You don't know what it is, Claudia. Your life as far has been one of unclouded sunshine, and sorrow is to you only a name."

"Yes," murmured the girl softly. "I suppose you are right, but I very often think of my mother, and how delightful it would have been if she had lived. I seem to know nothing whatever about her, for neither you nor papa will speak to me of her, and none of the servants ever mention her name. I am aware that she died here—because she is buried in the church, but I do not even know the illness that proved fatal to her."

"There is no reason why you should know," returned Miss Brent, sharply. "It is heartless of you to bring back the remembrance of that old pain, and I have told you many times not to mention the subject before your father, seeing that it must be worse for him than it is for me. Why, can't you let the dead past bury its dead?"

As she spoke she left the room, and Claudia was as much surprised as pained at the sudden outburst she had so unwittingly evoked.

Left alone she pondered thoughtfully over the strangeness of her aunt's words and manner, and an old idea that had vaguely haunted her for a long while past gradually took shape.

There must have been something out of the common about her mother's death—some mystery, which it was thought undesirable for her to know; and it was for this reason such a careful silence had always been preserved on the subject. Otherwise, it was surely natural that Sir Everard should have spoken of the fair, young wife who had died, out down like a flower in the pride of her youth and beauty, within two years of her marriage, and only a few months after her baby's birth.

Claudia remained lost in a reverie, until the sound of the bell reminded her that luncheon was ready, and recalled her from the realms of dreams into those of matter-of-fact reality.

CHAPTER II.

That same night Claudia and her father were going to a dinner-party at Thelby Hall—the residence of young Squire Thelby, who was their nearest neighbour, and who was suspected of a more than friendly admiration for the Baronet's beautiful daughter.

Claudia was not without a tinge of vanity—what true woman is?—and as she stood in front of the large cheval glass looking at the image it gave back, she smiled with shy pleasure at the reflection of her own beauty.

"You look real lovely, miss!" said her maid, Amelia, with unforged admiration, and, as a matter of fact, she really did.

Her dress was of some glistening, silvery tissue, profusely trimmed with white lace, and caught up here and there with sprays of delicately-tinted apple-blossom, another spray of which was fastened in her hair. Round her milk-white neck and beautifully moulded arms, were strings of pearls, fastened by diamond clasps, and diamond buckles glittered in the bows on her dainty little satin shoes.

"I think I do look rather nice," she murmured to herself, catching up her white feather cloak and long tan gloves, and then she descended to the hall, where her father, a stately, but benevolent-looking man of between fifty and sixty, was waiting for her.

"Are you sure you are wrapped up enough?" he asked, anxiously, and gazing at her with fond pride as he spoke. "These May nights are apt to get chilly, you know, and I don't want you to catch cold."

"No danger of that, daddy, dear!" she retorted, lightly. "I'm not a delicate hothouse flower, but a very healthy and substantial young woman—aren't I, auntie?" to Miss Brent, who had come out of the drawing-room to see them off.

The latter smiled, and patted her niece's shoulder.

"Yes, I don't think you are particularly fragile; nevertheless, one can't be too careful," she returned. "I hope you will have a pleasant evening."

"Oh, *cela va sans dire!* I wish you were coming with us."

"I shall be infinitely happier at home, thank you, my dear," said Miss Brent, quietly, and as they drove away, Claudia was struck anew by the beauty of her aunt, who, standing on the step to watch them off, looked a singularly statuesque and imposing figure.

"How is it that she will never come out with us?" she asked her father. "We meet plenty of women a good deal older than she is, who seem to enjoy society, and yet she will not accept an invitation even to a quiet dinner."

"My dear," the Baronet returned, gravely, "your aunt had a great sorrow in her youth, and it turned the whole of her life into a tragedy. Some day you may hear the details, but I will not sadden you with them now."

"Was it a love affair, daddy?" asked Claudia, in a lower voice.

"Yes."

"And did her lover die?"

A spasm contracted the Baronet's features, and it was a moment before he replied.

"Her lover died—don't ask me any more

questions, dear. As I said before, some day you shall know all."

But in his heart Sir Everard hoped that day might be a long way off.

Claudia was silent for a little while, and presently her father took her hand, and held it tenderly in his.

"How thoughtful you are, my darling! Were you wondering whether Thelby would admire your new dress, which is, I confess, when worn by you, quite worthy of admiration?"

"I wasn't thinking of Thelby at all," replied the girl, indifferently, "and I don't think I care much whether he likes my dress or not?"

"I am afraid you are ungrateful, and fail to appreciate Thelby's attentions"—which same attentions the Baronet himself was inclined to encourage, for the Thelby estates joined his own, and their young master would be in every respect a son-in-law to be desired.

He was rather a good-looking young man, fair, florid, and somewhat inclined to be fat—as Claudia was quick to notice when he came forward to meet them as they entered the drawing-room, and afterwards led them up to his mother—an old lady in black velvet and emeralds, who bore a striking and unflattering resemblance to a prize pig.

"Do you find the rooms dark?" asked the young man, seating himself by Claudia's side on the settee. "My mother would not have the lamps lighted until dinner time, because she said it was such a shame to light out the daylight."

"You won't have long to wait," observed the girl, for at that very moment the butler announced "dinner," and the young squire had to get up and search out the old Dowager Countess, to whom etiquette forced him to offer his arm.

Before doing so, he brought up a tall, well-built young man, who, strange to say, had two or three primroses in his button-hole.

"Miss Brent, will you allow me to introduce Mr. Lionel Fane?"

And Claudia, as the host went away, found herself confronted by the young artist himself.

"What a surprise!" she exclaimed, rising, and taking his offered arm.

"To me it is a most pleasant one," rejoined Fane, flushing with unceasing delight as he recognized the girl whose face had haunted him all day long.

"Well," Claudia observed, demurely, "our acquaintance is put upon a proper footing now that we have been introduced to each other, and I shall be able to bow to you when I meet you in future."

"And shouldn't you have been able to do so if the introduction had not taken place?" he asked, much amused at her reticence.

She shook her head in very positive negation.

"Oh, dear no! It would have been improper, and Mrs. Grundy would never have forgiven me."

"I think Mrs. Grundy the most hateful female on the face of the earth!" exclaimed the artist, with quite unnecessary vehemence.

"Do you? That is a bond of sympathy between us, then; for"—lowering her voice mysteriously—"I am always doing something to offend her. The fact is, I generally say and do whatever comes into my head, and it is nearly always something I ought not to say or do. Isn't it a funny thing that forbidden pleasures are usually the sweetest?"

"Not funny at all. It is human nature."

By this time they were seated at the table, with its delicate exotics; its cut glass, and glittering silver; and Claudia was glancing round to see who was present. The conclusion she came to was that no other young man at the table was half as good-looking or half as pleasant as Fane himself; and having arrived at this decision, she turned to him again.

"Are you a friend of Mr. Thelby's?"

"Yes. I met him abroad last year, and was happy enough to render him some slight

service, which he very much exaggerates. This morning, after leaving the plantation, I came upon him in the village, and he at once pressed me to dine with him this evening. For a long time I refused, but he overcame my scruples—for which, at the present moment, I feel deeply grateful to him."

"Don't you like dinners, then?"

"Not particularly."

"Ah! but you will when you grow older," said the girl, with a sage nod, whereat Fane began to laugh.

"What makes you think so?"

"All men do. Aunt Pauline says it is their nature to."

Fane laughed again, and the host, glancing in his direction, did not feel too well pleased as he saw the friendly relations that had so quickly been established between the two young people.

"And what about women?" queried the artist.

"They are different—at least, most of them. For myself, the only part of the dinner I care for is the dessert."

"You like sweets, then?"

"I adore them."

"Naturally. Sweets to the sweet, you know."

Claudia looked at him with a certain amount of grave rebuke.

"I wish you had not said that."

"Why not?"

"Because it is the sort of thing any one would say, and it seems as if I had expected it."

"I am very sorry"—contritely. "I did not intend a compliment."

"Oh!" returned Claudia, "I did not regard it in that light, but rather as a conventionalism. I like compliments"—candidly—"but I don't like conventionalisms at all."

She said this with a delicious little air of quaintness that Fane found irresistibly charming. Every moment the glamour she had thrown about him deepened, and the spell of her presence grew more potent.

He did not ask himself how it would end—how it must end. Delight visits us so seldom that we surely need not frighten it away when it comes by visions of a saddened future!

"When we—the ladies, I mean—are gone to the drawing-room, you must make friends with papa," said the young girl, presently; "and then you can ask him about the permission for your sketch being published. It is so much more satisfactory to talk than to write to people."

"Much more," rejoined Lionel, emphatically; and he took her advice, and contrived so well to ingratiate himself with the Baronet that the latter gave him an invitation to his house!

When the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room Fane immediately went up to Claudia, who was listlessly turning over the leaves of an album—without, however, paying much heed to its contents.

Her face lighted up into a charming smile as she greeted the young artist.

"Well?" she said, interrogatively.

"I have not only obtained Sir Everard's permission to publish the sketch of the park, but he has also invited me to come and see the picture-gallery to-morrow!"—triumphantly.

Claudia struck her hands softly together.

"That is capital! And are you coming?"

He looked at her with unconscious reproach.

"Can you ask such a question?"

"Well," said the girl, colouring slightly under his gaze, "I did not know whether you might not have another engagement."

"I am afraid if such had been the case it would have gone unfulfilled."

"Miss Brent," said Squire Thelby, approaching them at that moment, "will you sing for us? I am commissioned by my mother to tell you how much pleasure it will give us."

Claudia made a pretty little petulant gas-

ture with her shoulders. She did not like her *little-a-little* being thus interrupted.

"Why don't you ask Lady Dynavor, Mr. Thelby? She sings ever so much better than I do."

"I don't know about that, but"—with emphasis—"I do know that I would rather hear you than anyone else in the room."

The girl rose with a little laugh.

"After that I can hardly refuse any longer, but I haven't brought my music, and I really don't think I can remember anything without it."

Almost beneath his breath, Fane murmured,—

"Some day!"

"Ah, yes," said Claudia, colouring ever so slightly. "Papa says it is a stupid, sentimental little song, but it is rather pretty all the same."

She had not a very powerful voice, but it was sweet and pathetic, and the simple little ditty she had selected—or rather that Fane had selected for her—suited it admirably.

A complete silence reigned in the room while she was singing, and Lionel's eyes never once left her profile, although his pleasure was somewhat marred by the sight of Thelby leaning over her while she sang.

"Perhaps," he said to himself, "it may come some day. Who knows?"

But what the "it" was we leave to the imagination of the reader.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning the sun, peeping in between the drawn blinds of the breakfast-room, shone on a very picturesque *tableau*, in the shape of Sir Everard and his sister, seated at the table, with its decorations of moss and primroses, and Claudia pouring out the coffee, and looking like some blooming young Hebe in her pale pink, cambric dress.

"I like your artist friend very much," observed the Baronet, laying down his newspaper, and addressing his daughter. "He is a clever, bright young fellow, and there is something in his face that seems curiously familiar to me. I can't tell who it is he reminds me of; perhaps I shall be able to do so when he comes to see the picture-gallery to-day."

"Who is coming to see the picture-gallery to day?" sharply asked Miss Brent, who disapproved of anything going on in the house without her knowledge and consent.

"The young man who gave me the sketch yesterday, auntie, dear," replied Claudia, dimpling into a mischievous smile.

"Nonsense, Claudia!"

"Indeed, auntie, it is true—isn't it, daddy?"

Miss Brent turned to her brother rather angrily.

"Why don't you correct this wild girl, Everard?"

"Because I don't see that she needs correction," said the Baronet, rather obstinately.

"Did she tell you of her meeting, and speaking to a perfect stranger in the plantation yesterday? And do you mean to tell me that was becoming conduct in a young lady of position?"

"There was no harm in it, so long as it was done innocently. Besides," he added, rather hurriedly, and perhaps feeling that he was likely to be worsted in the argument, "the young man was introduced to her at Thelby Hall last night, and he seems a very decent sort of young fellow indeed. I was much taken with him myself."

"And papa has asked him to luncheon," put in Claudia, who could not resist a certain amount of sly triumph over her aunt's discomfiture.

Miss Brent said nothing, and finished her breakfast in complete silence. She was trying to digest the very unpalatable truth that the sceptre of Brentwood was being trans-

ferred from her hands to those of Claudia, whose influence over her father grew stronger with each day that passed, and the knowledge was gall and wormwood to her arrogant nature.

For seventeen years she had been complete mistress over Brentwood, and her strong will had ever swayed her brother, whenever it had suited her purpose to exert it to the utmost. It was rather hard now to feel that her day was over, and that a younger and fairer woman reigned in her stead.

Claudia was restless that morning; she ran in and out of the garden and conservatories, gathering a flower here, a spray of fern there, and half-distracting the head-gardener, who however, was too fond of her to complain.

"She's just like a flower herself," he would say sometimes, "and she's sweeter than any flower that ever blossomed in the world!"

Which was the highest praise Andrew Johnson knew how to bestow.

When Fane arrived—which he did at the earliest moment he felt he could with decency appear—he found Claudia alone in the drawing-room, and she rose and greeted him with a certain demure dignity that became her infinitely.

"You haven't brought Rollo?" she said.

"No; I was afraid he would be in the way. I left him in charge of Mrs. Peters, my landlady, and I must say she undertook the charge very reluctantly, and only on condition that I would shut him inside my room, and lock the door. She stands a good deal in awe of him, I think."

Claudia laughed.

"I am not surprised. He is so big, and Mrs. Peters is so little. I know her very well. She was my nurse when I was a tiny baby."

"So she tells me," returned Fane, but he did not add that he had hindered Mrs. Peters for a whole hour from her work that morning, for the purpose of making her talk of her former charge.

At this juncture the door opened, and Miss Brent came in, her eyes immediately falling on Lionel, who was standing just in front of the window, in such a position that the light fell fully on his face.

Pauline Brent was not a woman given to hysterics or fainting, but for a minute it certainly seemed as if she would succumb to one or the other, for she threw out her hands with a strange, almost tragic, gesture, and a low cry, half stifled, escaped her lips.

"Who are you?" she cried, breathlessly, while a shiver shook her limbs.

Claudia came forward in surprise, and took her hands.

"This is Mr. Fane, auntie—the gentleman of whom I spoke to you this morning."

"Fane—Fane!" repeated Miss Brent, vacantly. Then she shook her head. "I do not know the name—I never heard it in my life before, but the face. Oh!"—shuddering—"I know that so well—so well!"

She sank down on a couch near, and covered her face with her hands, while Claudia looked on in deep surprise, shared also by Lionel himself.

A few minutes' reflection seemed to remind Miss Brent that her conduct was very strange, and she made a great effort to recover her self-possession.

"I must apologise," she said, getting up and shaking off Claudia's detaining hands, while she advanced nearer to the window, where Lionel was still standing, lost in astonishment at the effect of his presence; "but when I saw you first you reminded me very strongly of a dear friend who died many years ago, and for the moment I was quite unnerved. Now that I see you closer, I perceive my mistake—you are not so much like him as I fancied."

Fane bowed in some embarrassment, hardly knowing what to say, and all were relieved by the entrance of Sir Everard, who at once proposed an adjournment to the picture-gallery.

There are some days that stand out from the rest so vividly that we are apt to date

after-events from them, and almost to lose sight of what has gone before. Such an one was this to Lionel, and, perhaps, it may be added, to Claudia also, for not a cloud dimmed its sunshine, and she had that consciousness of a sympathetic presence which goes so far towards enjoyment.

After the picture-gallery had been gone through it was luncheon time, and Lionel found himself seated beside Miss Brent, who seemed to have completely recovered from her morning's agitation, and was as charming to the young man as if he had been some old friend whom it pleased her to honour. Indeed, after the meal was over, she asked him to accompany her out on the terrace in order to show him the view, and although he would infinitely have preferred seeing it with Claudia he had no alternative but compliance.

Once out there, however, she paid little attention to the view, and Lionel had a curious idea that she was trying, in vulgar parlance, to "pump" him concerning his own affairs. She asked him how it was he had become an artist, where he went to school, and various other questions concerning his family, all of which he answered with perfect frankness.

"I am an orphan," he said, "and have been brought up by my grandmother. My mother died at my birth, and my father some six years later. I have only a faint remembrance of him, for even then I was living with my grandmother, and seldom saw him. He was drowned at sea, I believe, on his way to America."

"What is the name of the place where your grandmother lives?"

"Abbots Norton. It is in W—shire."

Miss Brent turned away so that he could not see her face, which had grown ghastly pale, and after a moment's pause he added, with a laugh,—

"I have very few relatives—none that I know of besides my grandmother, so I have my own way to make in the world."

"So far you have been successful?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, "pretty well. That is to say, I have had a couple of pictures hung on the line at the Academy for the last two years, and I sold them for a very fair price. I shall also be paid pretty well for my present commission, which, however, I accepted chiefly because it afforded me the excuse for a walking tour through one of the prettiest parts of England. But I fear I bore you—it cannot possibly interest you to hear the affairs of a perfect stranger like myself."

"Indeed," interrupting him, eagerly, "you make a great mistake, for I am extremely interested, and shall like to hear any details you may care to tell me."

"There is nothing more to tell. My twenty-five years have been uneventful ones—more's the pity!"

"Don't say that!" she exclaimed, with some bitterness. "Lives that are the least eventful are always the happiest—I am sure of that."

Meanwhile Claudia, peeping from behind the curtains, turned to her father with a roguish smile.

"Daddy, Aunt Pauline is flirting most abominably with our artist, and it is not fair, considering how she went on about him at breakfast time."

"I suppose your Aunt Pauline is like the rest of her sex, my dear—not proof against a handsome face," responded the Baronet, dryly.

"Is Mr. Fane handsome?" Claudia murmured, half to herself. "He is very nice, but I don't think I had thought about his good looks. Yes,"—after a pause, during which she had regarded him intently from her coign of vantage—he might be the model for Phœbus, certainly, or any of the young Greek gods—his features are quite classical!"

"He's a clever young man, too," pursued the Baronet; then, a minute after, he added, "I wonder whether he can paint portraits well. If so, I should not mind commissioning him to paint you."

"Oh, papa! Do you really mean it?"

"Certainly I do. I have often thought I should like to have your picture, but somehow—well, the opportunity has not occurred!"

The Baronet was one of those easy-going men who put things off as long as they can, and who rarely have the prudence to foresee difficulties before they occur. He had taken a fancy to the young artist, and thought it would be pleasant to see a good deal of him, but the idea of this intercourse being dangerous for his daughter did not strike him.

Fane, when asked, modestly said he was sure he could not do justice to Miss Brent; nevertheless, he showed himself very anxious to undertake the task, and it was arranged that she should give him sittings every morning.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in loitering about the sunny lawns, and sitting in the shadow of the trees, and for the most of the time Claudia was left to entertain the visitor, for Miss Brent had retired to her own room, and Sir Everard was in his study—supposed to be deep in accounts, but really enjoying an afternoon nap!

And so the golden hours went by, and—

"Love took up the harp of life, smote on all the chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, that trembling, passed in music out of sight!"

CHAPTER IV.

At the end of a week, Claudia's picture had made very considerable progress, for Lionel was a swift worker, and in this instance the task was a labour of love.

Miss Brent was usually in the room, to play propriety during the sittings, but it often happened that the two young people met each other in the park, or found the opportunity for occasional *à-à-ttes*, and it was no wonder that in the hearts of each a love had grown up, which, though unconfessed so far as Claudia was concerned, had already made a difference in the young girl, taking her in a single leap from childhood to womanhood.

She had grown quieter and less playful than she used to be, and would often fall into reveries, the subject of which it was not difficult to guess from the smile that played round her lips.

One evening, when he was sitting alone in his little lodgings—alone, that is to say, save for the presence of Rollo, who was lying in front of the window, and taking up nearly the whole width of the room—Lionel took himself seriously to task, and looked his position fully in the face.

He was quite aware that he was passionately in love with the fair, young girl, whose blue eyes had taken captive his senses the first time they glanced into his, and he was also aware of the hopelessness of such a love.

How could he expect it possible that he should win her—he, a penniless, struggling artist, with only his brains to depend upon, and she, the only daughter and heiress of a rich Baronet?

The idea was absurd, and Fane was sufficient man of the world to know that, kind as Sir Everard always was to him, he would laugh him to scorn if he appeared in the character of a suitor for his daughter.

No, the only thing for him to do was to go away, and strive to forget her, although he knew that however much he might strive, his efforts would be unsuccessful, for she had become so entwined with the very fibres of his heart that nothing but death could ever tear memory from it.

Still, to go away would be the most honourable course of action he could pursue, and the young man cursed his own folly for having stayed so long; but the temptation had been so great, and his pleasure in her society so enthralling, that prudence had been forgotten.

The entrance of Mrs. Peters with his supper tray broke in suddenly on his meditations.

"Lor, sir! Why, you be all in darkness, just for all the world like an owl!" observed the little woman, bustling about to light the lamp.

"For my part, I can't bear to sit in the twilight thinking, for it always makes me feel that miserable I don't know what to do!"

Lionel smiled, and was of opinion that, in this particular instance, thinking had had the same effect upon him.

He had grown to like his little landlady, perhaps because she was as fond of talking of Claudia as he was of listening.

"And how's the picture getting on?" inquired Mrs. Peters, alluding to Claudia's portrait, in which she took a very vivid interest.

"It has progressed very rapidly—so rapidly, that I think to-morrow will be the last sitting," he returned, rather sadly.

"Do you mean it will be finished?"

"No, not quite that, but I shall not require Miss Brent to sit to me any longer. I shall take the painting up to my studio in London, and finish it there."

"I should think Miss Claudia 'll make a lovely picture," observed Mrs. Peters (who was always ready for a bit of gossip). "She's pretty enough for a waxwork—and so was her mother, poor lady!"

This was the first time the landlady had ever spoken of the late Lady Brent, and Lionel said, with some interest,—

"Is Miss Brent like her mother?"

"The very image of her, she is. But I hope she'll have a very different fate."

"Was Lady Brent unhappy then?"

"No, certainly not. In fact, I should think she was as happy as she could possibly be, barring the fact of having to live with her sister-in-law. It's a mistake, living with your husband's relations after you are married, and so I always said," added Mrs. Peters, with a wise shake of the head. "Miss Pauline had been mistress so long that she didn't like giving it up to her brother's new wife, who was little more than a child at the time of her marriage, and I daresay there used to be quarrels between them. In fact I know there was; for Miss Pauline has a frightfully violent temper, and sometimes it used to break out beyond her control. Barring that, though, I should think Lady Brent was very happy, for her husband worshipped the very ground she trod on, and she was a sweet-tempered woman herself."

"What did you mean, then, by saying you hoped her daughter would have a different fate?"

Mrs. Peters hesitated a moment, then closed the door, as if in fear of eavesdroppers.

"Well, sir, I spoke without thinking. It's a subject as we don't talk about, because Sir Everard likes it to be kept as quiet as possible, and has done all he could to prevent its reaching Miss Claudia's ears. What I meant to say was, I hoped Miss Claudia wouldn't be murdered like her poor mother was."

"Murdered!"

"Yes, sir. It can't matter, me speaking of it to you, seeing as how you are a stranger, and will go up to London, and forget all about it; but we don't mention it in the village."

"But who murdered her?" asked Lionel, deeply interested in this past tragedy.

"Well, sir, it was a friend of Sir Everard's, who was staying in the house—a Mr. Moreland, and he was engaged to be married to Miss Pauline. Poor thing! It spoilt her life, too, for she's never been the same since. Lady Brent was stabbed with a Moorish dagger that was kept in her boudoir as a paper-knife, and she died directly, without so much as a moan."

"And what became of the man?"

"He was arrested at once, and taken to the county gaol, and there he died the very next day. The doctors said he had heart disease, and that it was the excitement that killed him, but my opinion is as it was a judgment from Heaven."

"There was no doubt of his guilt, then?"

"None whatever. Why, he was found in

the room—Lady Brent's boudoir it was—with the dagger in his hand, and blood on his clothes; besides, he confessed that he was the murderer, although he wouldn't say why he had committed the crime. We all knew he didn't like my lady, and she didn't like him, and it seems she had done her best to break off his engagement with Miss Pauline, and there had been quarrels between the two in consequence. Poor Sir Everard! I never saw a man out up as he was. He went abroad for five years—him, and his sister, and the baby. Miss Claudia knows nothing about it to this day, and it's to be hoped she never will."

"How quiet you are, Mr. Fane!" exclaimed Claudia, the next morning, after the sitting was over, and the young artist was putting up his brushes, "you have hardly spoken a word since you came!"

Lionel, in some confusion, muttered something about a headache; and Miss Brent, who had been seated in the window recess, working at her knitting, came forward, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Yes," she said, looking into his face, "you are pale, and your eyes are heavy. Let me give you a dose of *sal volatile*; it will do you good," and before the young man could remonstrate she had left the room, in search of the promised draught.

"Your aunt is very kind to me," murmured Lionel, after she had gone.

"Yes," returned Claudia, "you are a favourite of hers, and, let me tell you, it is a distinction enjoyed by very few people indeed, so you ought to appreciate it."

"I do. You have all been very kind—Miss Brent, Sir Everard, and yourself. It will make going away all the harder."

"Going away!" faltered Claudia, and the pretty rose-bloom left her face as she spoke.

"Are you thinking of going away, then?"

"I must. Business," he turned away so as not to meet her gaze while he said it, "calls me back to town immediately. I need not say how much I shall regret saying 'good-bye' to Brentwood."

Claudia made no reply. She was looking very intently at her picture, but with eyes that saw nothing through a mist of unshed tears.

"I have brought some eau de Cologne as well," said Miss Brent, returning; and then, in spite of Lionel's remonstrance, she made him drink the dose, and sit down on the couch while she bathed his brow with the scent.

"There! Does not that cool you?"

"It is delicious!" he rejoined, gratefully, and as he spoke he raised her hand to his lips. "You bring back to me visions of the mother I never knew."

There seemed to be something in the words that agitated her, for she rose quickly, letting fall the bottle of Cologne water, which was spilt over the floor.

"I believe I am growing nervous in my old age," she said, with an awkward laugh, to cover her confusion; "and as it will be sure to increase with years I have not a very pleasing prospect before me, have I?"

"Auntie," said Claudia, abruptly, "Mr. Fane is going away—at once."

Miss Brent was silent for a moment, then she turned to him, saying quickly,—

"Oh, no! you must not think of such a thing. We cannot spare you."

"You are very good, but, unfortunately, I am compelled to leave," he muttered, confusedly, hardly knowing what excuse to make for his sudden determination, and quite incapable of understanding the wistful look cast upon him by Pauline Brent.

"Then, if you go, you must give us your address," she said, "for now that we know you, it will not do for us to lose sight of you altogether."

He willingly complied with this request, and presently they all went out on the lawn, in search of Sir Everard, who was supposed to be in one of the greenhouses.

"I will fetch papa," observed Claudia, who,

as a matter of fact, really wanted an excuse for getting away in order to shed a few tears, which, in spite of her endeavours, would keep coming into her eyes.

"Very well; we will wait for him under the copper beech," said her aunt, leading the way to a rustic bench, and motioning Lionel to a seat by her side.

"Mr. Fane," she said, very earnestly, when they were alone, "I want to say a few words to you before you go, and although you may be surprised to hear them from the lips of a stranger, I hope you will not attribute them to any but the true motive, which is a deep interest in you and your future."

She paused and drew a long breath, while the young man, albeit grateful, was assuredly astonished.

"From what you have said"—she spoke more slowly now, and with a certain amount of embarrassment—"I have deduced the idea that you are not very well off now. I want you to look upon me as a friend, and to let me help you pecuniarily."

"My dear Miss Brent, you are very good, but really I am in no want of pecuniary aid," answered the young man, flushing a deep crimson all over his face. "Still, I am grateful for your kindness all the same."

"And yet you will not let me aid you?"

"I assure you I am in no need of help at the present moment. I am not a rich man by any manner of means, yet, on the other hand, I make enough by my paintings to keep me in comfort, if not luxury."

"Still, you may require money by-and-by?"

"In that case I might take advantage of your generosity: at present I could not conscientiously do so," returned the young man firmly.

Miss Brent sighed, and looked disappointed. "You have not misunderstood my meaning—you believe that I wish to be your friend?" she said, eagerly.

"Certainly, and, as I said before, I am very grateful. I do not know what I have done to deserve your kindness."

"You are like someone I once knew—so like—so like!" she murmured, half to herself; and then, as if overcome by some great agitation, she got up, and went into the house, leaving Lionel more astonished than he had ever been in his life.

He could not understand her. She was a mystery which it was beyond his power to solve. That she had a friendly feeling for him he did not doubt, but it must have been a very strong friendship indeed, which had induced her to lay her purse at his disposal so soon after knowing him.

"I can't find papa anywhere," said Claudia, returning. "Why"—stopping short—"where is auntie?"

"She has gone indoors."

There was an awkward pause. Claudia stood quite still, with her slim, white fingers interlaced one in the other, and her eyes downcast, while the flickering shadows fell on her sun-bright hair, and on the long, curly lashes, fringing her drooping lids.

Lionel rose hurriedly. He felt that if he stayed there, and looked at her any longer, all considerations of prudence would be forgotten, and his love would rush tumultuously from his lips.

"I think I will go back home now, and pack up my few effects," he observed. "I intend leaving by the evening train, but I will come in this afternoon if I may, and say adieu to Sir Everard, and make arrangements for your picture to be sent up to my studio. Good-bye."

He held out his hand, and she put hers into it.

Lionel looked up, and there, coursing slowly down her cheeks, were two tears.

Claudia was very young, it must be remembered, and had not yet learnt the lesson of disguising her feelings. She did try—very hard indeed—to prevent those tears from falling, but it was in vain.

"Are you sorry I am going? Do you really regret it?" asked Lionel, catching his breath sharply, and not loosing her hand.

The girl made no verbal reply, only lifted her eyes and looked at him; but in that glance Fane read the secret of which she herself was unaware, and in another moment his arms were round her, his kisses were on her lips, and he was telling her passionately how much he loved her—how miserable life would be to him without her; while she, with shy delight, yielded herself to his caresses, knowing that she had, indeed, met her fate!

CHAPTER V.

"And you were really going away because you loved me?" she said to him presently, when both had grown calmer, and were seated on the rustic bench, concealed from view by the friendly shade of the boughs.

"It was the best thing for me to do. How could I hope to win you—poor, nameless, as I am?"

She put her hand against his lips, with a pretty little imperious gesture.

"You must not talk like that! What do you suppose I care for wealth or fame? It is you I love—your very self, and all the wealth of the world could not make you dearer!"

He covered the delicate hand with kisses. "I know that, my darling, but what will your father say to me?"

Claudia's smile faded, but only for a moment.

"He may not like it at first," she said, candidly, "but when he sees that I should be miserable if he did not give his consent, he will come round all right. Dear old daddy! his only thought is for my happiness!"

Lionel could not feel equally certain, but was quite willing to be hopeful.

"I shall work so hard now that I have the thought of you to spur me on!" he said, fondly. "I feel capable of doing all sorts of great things—of painting a picture which shall challenge the admiration of the world, and then coming and laying my laurels at your feet!"

Life seemed very golden to those two, in the first delight of love and youth, as they sat together under the dancing shadow of the leaves, weaving a joyous future from their own fancies, and recking little of the dark shadow that was so soon to fall upon them.

Sir Everard—who, instead of being in the greenhouses, had gone to the village—caught a glimpse of them as he walked up the gravelled path, and came to a full stop, as if with the intention of disturbing their *titte-a-tte*, then seemed to alter his mind, and went swiftly into his study, where he was almost immediately joined by his sister.

She paused on the threshold, and looked at her brother in astonishment—as well she might, for his face was pale and drawn, and he seemed to be the prey of some great anxiety.

"What is the matter, Everard? Are you ill?"

"No, but I am very much worried," he answered, passing his hand wearily across his brow. "I met Thelby in the village, and we got talking of this young artist, Lionel Fane. Do you know who he is?"

It was now Miss Brent's turn to look pale, and her eyes fell under her brother's gaze.

"I suspect—" she murmured, in a low voice.

"Then why did you not tell me?" he cried, sternly. "Why did you permit me to have him under my roof—to welcome him as a friend, when in this very house his father stained his soul with my wife's life-blood?"

"He did not!" exclaimed Pauline, vehemently. "I have told you over and over again that he was innocent!"

"You have told me!" repeated the Baronet, with deep scorn. "And what do you think

your faith in him is worth, when he was taken red-headed from his awful crime, and with the weapon still in his grasp? He did not deny it himself, and if he had lived he would have been hanged for his crime. You believe in him, because he was your lover, and I suppose it is for that reason you have welcomed his son; but you have been wrong, Pauline—more than wrong, indeed, for you have betrayed my confidence, and I cannot readily forgive you!"

She covered her face with her hands, and remained silent, while the Baronet rang the bell.

"Go out on the lawn, and tell Mr. Fane I wish to speak to him," he said to the servant who answered his summons, and as he spoke Miss Brent looked up in quick alarm.

"You are not going to tell him the whole miserable story?" she exclaimed, with agonized entreaty. "He himself knows nothing of his father's identity, does not even know that he bears a false name! If you let him hear the truth, you will spoil the whole of his life."

"Are you sure that he is ignorant?"

"Quite—quite sure! I have questioned him closely, with a view to discovery."

"Then," said Sir Everard, "I shall tell him nothing more than that he must not come here again. I will pay him for Claudia's picture as though it were finished, and our intercourse must finally cease."

"How did Mr. Thelby learn who he was?" asked Pauline, still profoundly agitated.

"Through his family lawyer, who, it seems, pays Fane's grandmother an annuity. Thelby was speaking of Fane, who saved his life once, and then Stevens told him the truth, chiefly because he had heard that the artist visited me, and he thought it was not right I should remain in ignorance. I met Thelby on his way up the village to seek me."

There was no time to say more, for the artist himself stood at the door, and at a sign from her brother Miss Brent left the room, weeping bitterly.

Now that he was really face to face with his guest, Sir Everard felt the difficulty of his task, and paused, hardly knowing how to begin.

Eventually it was Lionel who spoke first.

"I was on the point of seeking you, Sir Everard, to tell you that I love your daughter, and to ask you whether you would permit me to declare myself her suitor," he said, coming to the point with straightforward directness. "I know that I am not rich, and that from a worldly point of view I am most ineligible, but I love her with all my heart, and if you will only give me hope I will prove myself worthy of her. I will compel fame and fortune to come to me!"

He spoke in an open, manly way that, in anyone else, would have challenged the Baronet's admiration.

Without attempting to conceal his knowledge of the presumption he showed in making love to an heiress, he yet, by virtue of his talent, and the love he bore her, ventured to approach Sir Everard on equal terms, although with a certain humility that was in itself half pride.

"You love my daughter—you wish to marry her!" exclaimed the Baronet, absolutely dumfounded by the request. "Do you mean to say you have told her this?"

"I have, sir, and she responds to my affection, and has promised to marry me, subject to your approval."

"Which you will never get! This is folly—madness. Put all such ideas out of your head once and for all. A union between you and Miss Brent is an impossibility."

"Pardon me," said the young man, firmly, but with deep respect. "Love itself levels all things, and by virtue of it I claim that you have no right to forbid our marriage. We love each other, and are willing to wait until I have achieved some sort of position by my paintings, but"—he drew himself to his full

height, and his eyes flashed—"I will never give her up—never—never!"

He spoke with such force and emphasis that Sir Everard was startled. In what a terrible position had he placed his daughter by admitting to his hospitality a stranger of whom he knew nothing!

"I tell you, Mr. Fane, that you can never be anything to Claudia—not even a friend," he said, in a voice that had grown hoarse with anxiety. "It is not a question of money or position—that I could waive in consideration of her happiness, but a gulf lies between you that can never be bridged over—that nothing can span, and it is for this reason you must go away at once, and promise me never to approach Claudia again."

It was now the young man's turn to look startled, for there was an earnestness in the Baronet's manner which convinced him he did not speak without adequate reason.

"What is this gulf?" he asked.

"I would rather not tell it you—indeed, it is much better you should not know."

"But I must know, Sir Everard!" cried Lionel, insistently. "You cannot expect me to take anyone's opinion save my own on so momentous a question!"

"I warn you it is for your happiness to remain in ignorance."

"I care not! Unless I recognise the reason of which you speak, nothing shall induce me to give up Claudia!"

"Then," said the Baronet, "since you will have it so, I will tell you the truth. Your father murdered my wife!"

The young man staggered back as if he had been shot. At first he hardly comprehended the meaning of the words.

"It is not true—it cannot be true!" he cried, hoarsely.

"It is true as Heaven. He was a widower, with one child, when he came to stay with me, and after his death that child was taken to by his mother, who changed her name, and went to live in a secluded village, where she was not likely to be recognized as the mother of a murderer. Do you think," said Sir Everard, pitifully (for the anguish on the young man's face touched him to the heart)—"do you think I would tell you a lie on such a subject? If so, you wrong me deeply."

Lionel was silent for a few moments, while his memory travelled back to his childhood, to his grandmother's ever-present sadness, to the reluctance she had always manifested in speaking of his father, and to the fact that she never alluded either to friends or relations.

Could this be the reason?

He groaned aloud, and hid his face in his hands, and Sir Everard added kindly,—

"Come, come, don't give way. Be a man, and look your trouble bravely in the face. It is very terrible, I admit, but you are not the first who has had to suffer for another's sins. Think of my agony when I saw my young wife lying dead—murdered under my very roof, and for no motive that we could ever discover! I would have spared you if I could, but you would not let me."

"No," said Lionel, "it is better for me to know the truth—if truth it be. But why did you let me come here if you knew this?"

"I did not know it—I only heard it this morning, or you may be sure I should have acted differently. My knowledge came through Stevens, the solicitor at W—."

Lionel started.

"Yes," he muttered, "I was aware my grandmother knew Stevens, for he collects some rents, and sends them to her every quarter."

He remained silent for a few minutes, then started up impetuously.

"I cannot bear this suspense. I will go without delay to my grandmother herself, and if she says this accusation is not true, I will come back and claim Claudia in spite of all the world! If it is true—"

"Well?" said Lionel, in a deepening voice. "I must give her up, and never see her again!"

An hour afterwards he was in the train, speeding rapidly towards the obscure little village where his childhood had been passed, and almost driven mad by conflicting emotions. How the time passed he never afterwards knew, for he seemed to be in a sort of dream that reeked of nothing save its own misery.

Station after station was passed, but he did not look up until they reached his destination, and then he sprang out of the carriage; and without taking any notice of the porters who greeted him, and with whom he used to be on such friendly terms, he strode hastily along the high road, thinking how much changed his life was since last he trod that road.

He had not seen Claudia since his parting with her under the copper beech, for she had gone to her room immediately, there to ponder over her new-found happiness.

Miss Brent had met him in the corridor, but, reckless of politeness, he had not stayed to speak to her, so anxious was he to get to the station, and so little inclined for the common amenities of life.

At last he arrived at Dale Cottage—a pretty little house, half smothered in roses, standing back from the road in a large garden, and bearing on its white curtained windows and brightly-polished knocker signs of the scrupulous care expended upon its cleanliness.

In the tiny, flower-scented parlour an old woman of between sixty and seventy was at work knitting a sock, which she dropped as she saw her visitor, and came forward with outstretched arms.

"Lionel, my dear boy! This is, indeed, a pleasant surprise!"

He kissed her affectionately, and then for the first time she noticed his changed appearance.

"Are you ill, my boy?" she asked anxiously.

"Ill in mind, but not in body. Grandmother," he put his hands on her shoulders, and looked down into her eyes, "I have been talking to Sir Everard Brent, and he—"

A little gasping sigh escaped her lips, and the young man felt her form tremble in his grasp.

"Sir Everard Brent!" she repeated, in a suffocated voice. "Why—oh, why did you go there?"

"You know him, then?"

She bent her head without replying—indeed, she seemed too agitated to speak, and her manner confirmed Fane's worst fears.

"Is it true that my father murdered Sir Everard's wife?" he asked, determined to hear the truth without delay.

The old lady did not reply.

"Answer me, grandmother—for pity's sake! This suspense is killing me. Only say 'yes' or 'no!'" he cried, his pain becoming intolerable.

As the reply came, he threw out his arms with a wild gesture of despairing appeal, for it was,—

"Yes!"

CHAPTER VI.

ALL that afternoon Claudia spent in her room; for, strange to say, Sir Everard was locked up in his study, and Miss Brent had declined coming downstairs. The young girl felt a little surprised that Lionel should have left without seeing her, and could only suppose her father's answer had been unfavourable; but she was prevented by a very natural shyness from seeking Sir Everard, and it was only when the whole of the afternoon had passed away, and five o'clock came, that she at length entered the study.

Her father was sitting at the table, with his head resting on his hands, and his attitude full of despondency.

"Daddy, dear!"

He looked up and held out his arms, and in another moment she was kneeling at his side.

"Daddy, dear, what did you say to Mr.

Fane?" she whispered, almost below her breath.

"My darling, I told him it was impossible that you could marry him. Hush! do not interrupt me until you have heard what I have to say. It is not only that he is below you in rank, and is poor, that I have come to this decision, for another and much more powerful reason exists, and he himself is ready to acknowledge it!"

The young girl had risen to her feet, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling.

"Papa, nothing shall part us—if he is only true to me! I will wait years, if need be, but I will never marry anyone else."

The Baronet shook his head sadly.

"It is Fate, my dear, that will part you. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children even unto the third generation, and the shadow of a crime lies between you, and will prevent your ever being anything to each other save strangers."

"What do you mean?" she said, impatiently, "you are speaking riddles."

"Claudia!" said Sir Everard, answering her question by another, "have I not always been a kind and affectionate father to you? Have I not given you your heart's desire whenever it lay in my power to do so?"

"You have indeed, papa. You have been the best and dearest of fathers always."

"Then can you not trust me now, and believe that I am acting for your good, and have your truest interests at heart? Doubtless Fane himself will write to you, and tell you he gives you up; and mind you, Claudia, it will be of his own free will, and not because I have made any effort to persuade him. One thing I exact from your love, and it is that you shall not try to discover the barrier which severs you, for the knowledge could not possibly do you any good, and would certainly pain you. My dear"—his tone became very tender as he kissed her brow—"I would willingly bear your trouble for you if it were possible, but remember we all have to suffer, old and young."

She left the study in a sort of bewildered dream. Poor Claudia! whose path had hitherto been strewn with rose-leaves. The thorns were pressing in her flesh for the first time, and her trouble was none the less heavy to be borne because there was a vague intangibility about it, whose origin she could not even guess.

Surely there must be some mistake, which the morning would clear up! Fate could never be cruel enough to part her from her lover, while his first kisses still lingered on her lips—his first love vows still echoed in her ears!

"Some day we shall be happy," she murmured to herself, and then, to while away the time, she tried to sing the song she had been humming when she met him first, but broke down ignominiously into a flood of tears!

Alas! the next day brought no Lionel, and the hours seemed to drag as wearily as if they were weighted with lead. By the evening post came a letter, and after glancing at the writing she ran into the window-recess, where the curtains hid her from view, and there she eagerly tore open the envelope, and read the enclosure, which ran thus:—

"I write to wish you an eternal good-bye, Claudia, for in all human probability, we shall never meet again—and it is better so, since nothing but misery could come of our meeting. I give you back the promise you gave me, and try to hope you will marry some good man, who will make you happy. Let you should think your father has had anything to do with this decision on my part, I tell you that even if he were to beg me to marry you, I could not do it, for there is a chasm between us which no endeavours can span. Farewell!"

A month later Claudia was presented at Court, and found herself in the vortex of fashionable society, where her beauty, and

the fact of being her father's heiress, made her one of the successes of the season.

Sir Everard had come to the conclusion that the best way to make her forget Fane would be to take her away from Brentwood, where at every turn she was reminded of him, and to throw her into the gaiety of London fashion, in the hope that some other lover might take his place in her heart.

Miss Brent quite agreed in this view, and came up to town herself in order to chaperone her niece and see her triumphs. Strange to say, since reading Lionel's letter, Claudia had never once alluded to him, and—much to her father's relief—had asked no questions concerning the reason that parted them.

As a matter of fact, the letter had been so positive, so hopeless, in its tone, that the young girl had recognized the futility of rebelling against its decision—and very likely pride came to her aid, and helped her to bear her pain in silence.

Still, it had changed her. She was no longer the bright, insouciant girl, with her half-childish gaiety, that had wandered in the wood in search of primroses. A sense of the pain and mystery of life had come upon her, and its influence would always remain with her.

She said nothing when Sir Everard suggested going to London, but submitted with quiet obedience, and made no objection to being presented at the next drawing-room; though, when it came to taking an interest in her dress, she was found quite lacking, and not all her aunt's endeavours could make her treat the subject otherwise than indifferently.

It was the same with the lovers that presently gathered round her, beseeching her smiles. She treated them all alike, with a certain icy friendliness that was little better than indifference itself; and towards the end of the season, when an Earl's coronet was laid at her feet, she rejected it as carelessly as if coronets grew on blackberry bushes.

"I think you are wrong, Claudia," her aunt told her, as they sat together in the morning-room in Park-lane. "You will never have such another offer."

Claudia smiled, half-scornfully, half-sadly. "I hope not, Aunt Pauline, for I shall never marry."

"Nonsense, my dear!"

"It is true," quietly. "If it were not for papa and you, I should just go into a sisterhood, and devote my life to labouring among the poor."

"My dear child, what a notion! And you not yet nineteen!"

Claudia made no reply, and her aunt looked at her wistfully, keenly conscious of the pale face, heavy eyes, and expression of sadness that had now become habitual to the girl.

Miss Brent's behaviour towards her niece, had changed very much of late. She had grown much more affectionate, and had taken the deepest interest in all the young girl did. Her heart smote her strangely as she observed the change these few months had made in her appearance.

"Have you not yet forgotten Mr. Fane?" she asked, softly.

"I shall never forget him, auntie, dear. My love was not given for a week or a day, but for ever and ever; and though we are parted, I feel that it is through no fault of his, and that, in spite of all, he is quite worthy of my affection. It will all come right some day," she said, more to herself than her companion. "Perhaps it may not be on earth, but there is a world beyond, and then—"

She concluded her sentence by a smile, and her aunt turned abruptly away, as if the words hurt her in some way.

That same night they went to a ball, for Claudia made no objection to going out. Indeed, she seemed ready to do anything her father wished, although she never showed any symptoms of enjoyment, such as would have been supposed natural to her age and position.

Miss Brent accompanied her, and the bril-

liant scene was one that certainly might have raised enthusiasm in any heart which the frost of age had not chilled. The flowers, the lights, the flashing jewels, the delicate scents, the soft, dreamy music, all made up a fairy land, whose effect was rendered more charming by the musical sound of falling waters in the conservatory, where the fountains were playing in their marble basins, amongst the broad, green, lily leaves floating on the surface.

Claudia had taken refuge from the heat under a huge tropical palm, and her cavalier was none other than George Thelby, who had followed the Brents up from W—shire in the hope that he might induce the young girl to become his wife.

"The place looks pretty from here, does it not?" he said, as he fanned Claudia with a white swan down fan that he had taken from her unwilling hand. "Those coloured lights have a very charming effect, but they ought not to be hung so low, for if one brushed against them they might fall, and then the consequences would assuredly be disagreeable!"

Claudia assented mechanically, without, however, looking to see whether the young man's fears were well-founded—as was, in effect the case, for the Chinese and other lanterns hung amidst the foliage were of necessity so lightly suspended that a mere touch would knock them off the branches.

Presently the band struck up a waltz, and Thelby rose, saying,—

"Shall I take you back into the ball-room?" Claudia shook her head.

"No, thank you. I have kept this dance free, and I would much rather sit it out here than in the ball-room. But don't let me keep you—no doubt you are engaged?"

Thelby reluctantly admitted this to be the case, and wished it had been otherwise, seeing that he would have infinitely preferred staying with her to dancing with his promised partner.

However courtesy forced him to go, and Claudia breathed a little sigh of relief as she found herself alone.

She remained for some time in a sort of dreamy reverie, listening to the rhythmic cadences of the waltz music, and wondering whether any other heart in the room was as heavy as hers, when she became aware of footsteps approaching, and looking up saw her aunt Pauline advancing towards her.

At that moment, the lace on Miss Brent's dress caught in a prickly cactus, and she turned sharply round to disengage it, and, in so doing, the very accident of which Thelby had spoken took place, for one of the lamps fell to the ground, and before even Claudia saw what had happened her aunt's light dress was in flames!

CHAPTER VII.

MISS BRENT was carried home in an unconscious state, and as soon as she was laid on the bed the doctors, who had been hastily summoned, examined her, and told Sir Everard that although she was badly burned they were not yet in a position to state the full extent of her injuries.

Evidently they entertained very little hopes of her ultimate recovery, for their eyes and voices were very grave as they gave their report.

Both Claudia and her father sat up with the sufferer, but it was not until morning that she opened her eyes and spoke.

Strange to say, she had a full recollection of all that had happened, and was quite aware of her own precarious condition.

"Don't look at me so sadly, Claudia," she whispered, with a faint smile, as the young girl moistened her parched lips. "It is better that it should be I than you. My life is well-nigh over, yours is all to come. I am quite willing to die."

"Don't talk about dying, auntie, dear,"

said the girl, in a stifled voice. "You will get better—"

"I don't think so, dear; in fact, I feel sure of it. Everard!"—her brother came to her side—"I want you to do me a great favour. Let Lionel Fane be sent for without delay."

The Baronet started violently, and did not reply.

"I have a reason for wishing his presence, and if you hesitate it will soon be too late," urged his sister. "This may be a dying request, surely you will grant it?"

"What good can his coming do?" muttered the Baronet, with an uneasy glance at his daughter, who had turned very pale.

"It will do good; besides, it is my urgent desire," said Miss Brent, in low, but insistent tones. "Remember, he is innocent—personally, he has done you no wrong."

Sir Everard was sorely tempted to refuse her request, but finally his good nature, and the thought of her condition overcame him, and he yielded to her entreaties, and sent a telegram to the young artist's studio, asking his immediate presence, and giving his reason for doing so.

All that day Pauline Brent lay perfectly still on her bed, apparently lost in thought, save when the pain of her burns wrung from her a deep groan, or the hospital nurse came to dress them.

Her face was uninjured, and Claudia was struck anew by its beauty, as it lay on the pillow, the rich dark fringes of her closed lids lying heavily on her cheeks, and her statuesque lips closed with an expression of patient resolve in their firm, clear-cut lines.

Once Claudia spoke to her of Lionel.

"Perhaps," she said, and her voice trembled, "he will be out of town."

"I don't know," replied Pauline, quietly, "but I feel that I shall see him soon, whether he is or not."

Her presentiment was fulfilled, for at a little after nine o'clock Fane made his appearance, and was brought in the room by Sir Everard himself.

"Had I not better go?" whispered Claudia, deeply agitated, but the invalid's hand closed tightly over her own.

"No. It is necessary you should stay."

The young artist looked pale and thin, as the subdued light of the hanging lamp fell on his face, and his lips trembled a little under the heavy moustache when he saw Claudia, but he advanced at once to the side of the bed, and took the hand Miss Brent extended to him.

"I should have obeyed your summons before, but the telegram had to be forwarded on to Devonshire, where I was staying, and it has taken me all day to get up to town," he said.

"You are in time," she murmured, her eyes resting on his face with a sort of satisfaction. "I knew I should see you before I died."

She paused a moment, and if an uninterested spectator had been present he could not have failed to be struck with the group. Sir Everard, tall and stately, and at the present moment puzzled looking, Claudia with downcast eyes and fluttering colour, Lionel gravely serious, kneeling at the side of the bed, and still holding Miss Brent's hand in his clasp.

"The Bible tells us that it is never too late to repent," said the sick woman, presently, "and if that is true there may yet be time for me to make my peace with Heaven, even though it be the eleventh hour. I am about to confess a great crime which has lain on my conscience for many years. Come nearer, Everard, for it concerns you as nearly as anyone."

The Baronet took up his position at the foot of the bed, and it was to him that his sister afterwards chiefly addressed herself.

"Do you remember when you first brought your young wife to Brentwood, and installed her there as mistress of the house where I had reigned for ten years—ever since I was fifteen?" she said, and it was a curious fact that as she proceeded her voice grew stronger.

"You told me you hoped we should be friends, but I knew quite well, from the first moment of our meeting, that such a hope was futile, for there were conflicting elements in each, and antagonism was bound to be the result. We kept up a semblance of friendship for twelve months or so, but it was only an armed neutrality, liable at any moment to break out into active warfare."

"Well, some time after your marriage one of your college friends came to visit you—Ernest Moreland." Lionel started violently as she mentioned the name, but without taking any notice, she went on—

"He was quite young, although he was a widower with one child, and he fell in love with me—passionately in love with me. We were engaged, although you gave your consent very reluctantly, for Moreland was poor, and had no profession beyond a sort of dilettante literary taste, which brought him in a small income through his writings. Between him and Lady Brent there was no love lost, and she many times remonstrated with me for my foolishness in engaging myself to him, when I had the chance of so much better offers."

"One day, I went to her boudoir to complain of some alteration that had been made in my room without my being consulted. I dare say I was in the wrong, and I know I spoke passionately and angrily, for I was very much incensed, and amongst other taunts I flung at her was the one that her rank had been considerably below that of my brother, and that she had married him for the sake of his money, and was presuming on her position. At this her temper rose, and she retorted angrily that if the brother had made a *mésalliance* the sister was about following suit!"

"Well, I suppose I was maddened by this allusion to my lover, and I took up a dagger that was lying on one of the tables, and declared if she dared say that again I would stab her. She was no coward, and she instantly repeated it, adding something even bitterer, upon which I carried my threat into execution!"

A simultaneous cry of horror rose from her three listeners, and her own brows contracted as if with the agony of remembrance, but she proceeded, in a perfectly firm voice—

"The moment I had committed the deed repentance came, and my first impulse was to give myself up, but as I went towards the bell Moreland himself entered. It seems he had heard Lady Brent's groan as he was walking along the passage, and fancying something must be the matter had opened the door."

"I suppose the moment he saw me with the dagger in my hand he comprehended the situation, for he took the knife from me and instantly commanded me to go to my room—which command I obeyed; and it seems directly after I left you, Everard, came in, and finding Ernest holding the knife, the blood from which had dripped on his clothes, ordered his arrest, and he was taken to prison."

"I did not know this, for I was in raging hysterics during the whole of the night, and these hysterics were naturally attributed to my horror at my sister-in-law's murder by Moreland. I was never once suspected. At last the doctor gave me a draught which sent me into an artificial sleep, and the first news that I heard the next morning was that Moreland had died in gaol of heart disease."

"Then it was that the idea of keeping my secret struck me, for since he was dead my confession could do him no good, and I found myself clinging to life with a desperation that I cannot now understand. Of course I was wicked, and weak, and my conduct altogether was vile. I have no excuse to offer—but I have expiated my wickedness in long years of torment! My whole existence has been one long pain, but through it all my dominant passion—pride—grew stronger and stronger, and kept me up in spite of everything."

"I made efforts to see Moreland's mother, in whose charge his son had been left, and

knowing she was not well off I offered her pecuniary aid, which she, however, refused. Still I learned that she had changed her name, and gone away to a little remote village, leaving the few cottages that belonged to her in the hands of a W— lawyer named Stevens, who sent her the rents every quarter, and that she was bringing up the boy also under a false name."

"Now"—she made a long pause, looking from one to the other of the averted faces—"I know that I do not deserve pardon, but I implore you to forgive me if you can, and to rectify the evil I have done. Think of my long suffering—think that I am dying, and be merciful."

Her voice rose to a shrill scream of anguish, and Claudia came forward and laid her hand on her father's arm.

"Tell her you forgive her, papa!"

Sir Everard tried to speak, but the words died away on his trembling lips. Lionel, who had not been so deeply injured, assured the dying woman of his pardon, but still her eyes sought her brother.

"Everard—Everard——!"

Then, with a supreme effort, the Baronet took her hand.

"I forgive you, Pauline, as I hope to be forgiven!"

It is eight months later. The primroses are starting the moss in the woods, and the daisies are sprinkled over Pauline Brent's grave—for at her own request her body was taken down to Brentwood to be buried, and after the funeral Sir Everard and his daughter went to Italy, to stay there for the winter.

They are back again now, and on their way through London are joined by Lionel Fane—for he still keeps his assumed name, although the truth about the murder is now known, and people cannot point to him as the son of a criminal.

He has done good work in the winter months, and his Academy picture—a young girl sitting in a wood, with bunches of primroses at her feet, and a vague, dreamy look in her eyes as she gazes into the sunny distance—has been highly praised, and has brought the artist a golden harvest. It is called "Someday!" and people who cannot understand the girl's expression wonder what the name means.

Claudia—between whom and the picture there is a great resemblance—knows perfectly well what it means, and indeed the meaning is fulfilled, for her father has given his consent to her marriage with Lionel, and the wedding is to take place as soon as a year has elapsed since Pauline Brent's death.

They never mention her name, but there are always fresh flowers on her grave, and certainly her memory has left more pity than anger in all their hearts; for if her sin was great, so, doubtless, was her suffering.

And so the "Someday" which was to bring happiness has come at last, and undimmed sunshine glorifies the path of the lovers, whose love is all the deeper for the "cleansing fires" through which it has passed!

[THE END.]

God bless all good old mothers. I never see, says a writer, an old lady sitting in the arm-chair but I think what storms have pelted into that cheery face without souring it. It may be that a man can go through more exertion than a woman, but at least it remains true that he cannot without losing his laughter, his good cheer, his gentleness and love and trust in mankind or God. Yet how rarely do you find a frail old mother whose spirit has been worn threadbare and unlovely by what she has endured. A sweet old mother is common. A sweet old father is not so common. As thy day so thy strength of love, thy riches of an inexhaustible benevolence and hope and faith. This is more apt to be a woman's story than a man's.

THE OLD TOWN GUARD OF EDINBURGH.—The old town guard were the only police of Edinburgh up to 1817, when they were succeeded by a more efficient body of men, selected, not for their past achievements, but for their promise for the future. The old guard were mostly old soldiers, and though very picturesque in appearance, with their imposing uniform and Lochaber axes, they were not a terror to evil doers by any means. The boys made fun of them, and it was one of the fixed laws of war among the youth that when the town guard veterans interfered to stop their Homeric combats, both sides united to "bicker," and, as a matter of course, completely to rout the battered old warriors, not a few of whom had smelled powder at Falkirk and Colloden. One of them particularly deserves mention, Duncan Macintyre, the sweetest of Gaelic poets, and distinctively the bard of the chase. Like Horace, with his shield at Philippi, Duncan had ingloriously left his broadsword at Falkirk, his heart having been much more with the golden-haired youth from "yont the seas" than with the heavy-jowled representative and avenger of the "wee German lairdie." Duncan attained the summit of his ambition when he became a private in the Edinburgh town guard, of which he was the only member that left in verse some graphic record of the fact.

WOMEN AS COLLECTORS.—A French lady of distinction, who recently died in Paris, left behind so great a stock of apparel that her executors despaired of disposing of it among a large circle of relatives and acquaintances. They had a complete inventory made of the wardrobe, and then sold it piece by piece at auction. It comprised seventy magnificent costumes of silk, plush, velvet, satin and other materials; fifteen mantles trimmed with rare furs; innumerable dressing-gowns, paletots, riding-habits, jackets, etc.; seventy petticoats and silk, plush and satin underclothing in enormous quantity; nearly three hundred pocket-handkerchiefs; one hundred and sixty-five pairs of stockings; sixty pairs of shoes; forty pairs of garters; one hundred bonnets or hats; ten muffs; forty umbrellas and parasols; and other articles in similar profusion. It was not a lot of old clothes. Everything was new and fresh, and of the finest quality; and the entire wardrobe, while it went at a great sacrifice, brought over six thousand four hundred pounds. Its original cost was estimated at six or seven times as much. The sale seems to have excited great interest in Paris among both sexes, the inventories being extensively advertised and commented upon. Various lectures on women's extravagance have been read by acrid journalists, but the sale on the whole was regarded as beneficial for the interests of the gentler sex, since it enabled wives to contrast their own modest possessions with the wardrobe of a well-known lady of fashion, and to claim for themselves considerable talent for economy. It was reserved, however, for M. Pillet, in the *Debats*, to draw the philosophical deduction that the extent of the wardrobe indicated that the deceased leader of fashion had collected clothes very much as wise men collect paintings, etchings, autographs, books, gems, porcelain, coins or postage stamps. She had not worn one out of forty of her lavish purchases, and evidently had not acquired them from any sense of personal need or to gratify what Mr. Carlyle styled "the decorative instinct" of the human family. She simply followed the bent of her mind as a collector of new and beautiful objects. If she was in any sense a type of her sex, the suggestion is one which may explain many mysteries of the boudoir and closet. It may resolve what vulgar prejudice has condemned as wanton extravagance into the common practice known among men as "making collections." Certainly if men are wise in their generation when they gather together antiquities of all sorts, women in their turn may be pardoned if they rank also as collectors of prevailing costumes and modes.

FACETIE.

CURIOUS fact: Stout people are very soon fat-igued.

PRETTY soon you will see a little duck of a bonnet on a little goose of a woman.

DEADHEAD: "Can I get a pass?" Railway officer: "Yes; pass out."

It is never too late to mend. But a man cannot expect to have a button sewed on much after midnight.

A SHARP observer has learned that old maids love to kiss and fondle cats because they have whiskers.

WHAT is the difference between a belle and a burglar? The belle carries false locks and the burglar carries false keys.

"Are you on terms of intimacy with Fraulein X—?" "Oh, yes! she has already told me what size glove she takes."

It has been discovered that four women walking abreast on the pavement can be scattered a little by an active man with a paint pot.

"DENY a monstrosity," said the teacher. And the children all replied in ringing chorus: "An insurance agent with the mumps!"

FLORIST (to young man): "Do you notice the blush upon those roses, sir?" Young man (feeling for his pocket-book): "Yes. They are probably blushing at the price."

"REDDIE, whom did you say our friend Eckstein had married?" "Ach! he has married money—a matter of four hundred thousand thalers. I have forgotten the other name."

"Oh, Ella," said Clara, "I think Lily and her beau have quarrelled!" "Why," replied Ella, "what makes you think so?" "Well, her parlour has been brilliantly lit every evening lately."

A: "Pray, can you tell me what that picture represents?" B: "That is the celebrated Queen Cleopatra. Have you never heard of her?" A: "No. Fact is, I hardly ever read the papers."

"How styles have changed since I was a young girl!" said an old lady. "When I was young we used to wear our dresses up to the neck and gloves with only one button. Now they wear the gloves up to the neck and only one button on the dress."

They had been at the masquerade, where she had recognized him at once. "Was it the loud beating of my heart, my darling, that told you I was here?" murmured he. "Oh, no!" she replied, "I recognized your long legs."

The train was approaching a large junction. "Are you going to eat your dinner at the station restaurant?" he asked of a passenger. "Yes," was the reply. "Just slip that card in your pocket," he whispered, "I'm an undertaker."

"Yes, sir!" he said, proudly. "I began life a barefooted boy, and see where I am now." "Yes, you are way up; but you had a big advantage at the start." "How so?" "You began life a barefooted boy; the rest of us began life as barefooted babies."

In a Paris restaurant, a gentleman and a snob are seated at the same table. The snob is just finishing his dinner, the gentleman just beginning his. The snob lights a cigar and blows a cloud of smoke over his coffee. The gentleman rises and says in the politest tone: "Excuse me, sir! will it annoy you if I eat while you are smoking?"

"How lovely the new moon is to-night, Mr. Simpson!" she said. "It looks like a crevice in the sky." "Yes," he replied, tremulously; "And I first saw it over my right shoulder. Perhaps there is some good fortune in store for me!" A little later he asked her to marry him, and she compromised on the I'll-be-a-sister-to-you basis, and what little separation Mr. Simpson had in him was knocked out.

WITT has a hog the most brains of all the animals? Because he has a hog's-head full of them.

"Ah!" yawned a bachelor, "this world is but a gloomy prison." "To those in solitary confinement," said a witty lady.

WHAT is the difference between the outer wall of a bridge and two nice young ladies?—The one is a parapet, and the other is a pair of pets—of course.

A LITTLE boy was asked about the story of Joseph, and if he knew what wrong his brethren did in disposing of him, when he replied, "I suppose they sold him too cheap."

"Well, how did you get along?" inquired a country landlord, one rainy morning, of a guest whom he had put in a top-floor room, under a leaky roof. "Oh, swimmingly," was the reply.

A SLEEPY deacon, who sometimes engaged in popular games, hearing the minister use the words, "Shuffle off your mortal coil," started up, rubbed his eyes, and exclaimed: "Hold on! it's my deal."

"Well," said Razorpen, more kindly than was his custom, "I can tell you how you can improve the play a little." "How?" asked Inkwell, gratefully. "You see, you kill the villain in the last act." "Yes." "Well, that is good. Now make him kill all the other characters in the first."

"MILDRED," said the girl's mother, "hand me my cookery-book. They are making a kind of preserve that I never heard of before, and I want to see if it is in." "What kind of preserve is it, mamma?" "They call it an ice jam, and I'd just like to know how it's made, because ice is cheaper in winter than in the summer!"

BEYOND THE REACH OF DRUGS.—"Are you feeling better, Mr. Featherly?" asked Bobby at the dinner-table. "Feeling better? I haven't been ill, Bobby." "I didn't know," said Bobby, indifferently. "Ma an' pa were talking about your genealogy last night, and ma said it couldn't be much worse. I supposed you were ill."

SCENE: Small but fashionable shop. Enter a lady of title, addressing a shop-walker: "I wish to exchange something I bought yesterday." "Yes, madam. Do you remember whether you were attended by the gentleman with the dark moustache, or the gentleman with the light beard?" "Oh, neither! It was the nobleman with the bald head."

"Did you see my picture in the paper to-day, dear?" inquired a young traveller who had taken quite an interest in politics, as he came into the house the other evening. "Yes, I did, and—and—Here she burst into tears. "Why, what's the matter? Why does it make you cry?" "Why, Jack, I'm so disappointed. If I had known you looked like that I'd never have married you."

GOVERNOR OF GAOL (to convict): "Your term of imprisonment expires to-day." Convict: "I am glad to hear it." "I hope that from now you will lead an honest, upright life." "You bet I will!" "Are you sure that you will not return to your evil ways?" "Never again will I be up to anything crooked." "You can go now." The released convict hesitates. "Why don't you go? What are you waiting for?" "Ain't you going to give me back my dark lantern and my jimmy and the rest of my professional implements?"

"It's an awful thing, force of habit. It's accountable for a great deal of misery and a great deal of happiness. Most things are done from force of habit. Swearing, drinking, loving, hating—all become habits, and can't be got over. A fellow goes courting, and it's awfully pleasant. At first it's novelty and fun, and then becomes habit, and they think it is love. The girl goes away for a month. He pines for a week, and when she comes back she's got out of the habit, and he's got into the habit of courting another girl, and it's all up."

A FATHER never thinks his ten-year-old son is stronger than a horse until he employs him to turn the grindstone to sharpen the old axe that is about as sharp at one end as at the other. The old man bears on until the lad's eyes hang out and his trousers buckle flies off, and just before he bursts a blood-vessel his father encourages him with the remark, "Does it turn hard?" Thousands of boys have run away from home and become pirates and anarchists in order to escape a second siege at the grindstone.

In an English opera company, formed for the summer months, it was found that the tenors were too light for the rest of the chorus. The manager protested that there were voices enough, and one of the singers was questioned why he did not sing with more force. He replied that C., the leader of the tenors, didn't, and that if C. would not sing out he was not inclined to strain his throat to do the work of two. C. was thereupon interviewed, and his answer to the remonstrance of the manager was: "I am paid summer wages, and I refuse to sing in anything but my summer voice."

A VERY richly-dressed woman alighted from an elegant carriage, and entering a furniture store, asked to be shown some lounges. "What kind of lounge shall I show you?" asked the polite clerk. "Oh, la' me! I don't know," was the reply. "I just want something I can lop down on when I'm give out. I've got half-a-dozen divans and sofas in my house now, but when it comes to lopping down and taking it easy, there ain't none of 'em of any account." A number of lounges were shown her, and finally one was found on which she thought she could "lop down" and "take it easy."

A FAIR START.

When Mr. and Mrs. Callboard returned from their wedding journey, they settled right down to house-keeping. Happier doves never nestled in a flat, and Mrs. Callboard determined to make home happy for Charley from the start. No future misunderstandings should arise in their domestic arrangements, if her wisdom and tact could prevent. When they sat down to their first meal, Nellie helped him to an opaque slab of something about an inch thick, that fell on the table with a dull, sickening thud.

"There is some home made bread like your mother used to make, Charley, dear," she said, sweetly. "I learned how to make that solid circle of roller composition around the middle of the loaf when we were stopping at her house last week; if you should ever want a change, I can make bread whiter than snow and lighter than sea foam, but this is the kind your mother makes, and I thought you might like it the first day to keep you from getting homesick. That nice cake," she added, seeing him thoughtfully endeavoring to indent with his fork a dark brown pyramid of elastic concrete, "is a cake such as your aunt Ellen used to make. I got the prescription from her. I don't eat it myself, but it is said to be harmless if not taken to excess. These irregular fragments of leather belting are doughnuts, like those your grandmother makes; she taught me how to make them, and I had a coroner's permit to make these. These ghastly remains on the platter are all that is left of the holocaust; that is chicken roasted after the favorite prescription of your sister Jane. And this, Charley, dear," she continued, proffering out a coal-black liquid, not quite so thick as the Missouri River, but far more odorous, "this is coffee like you used to get at home. I make all these things somewhat different for myself, and will use my own recipes as a rule, after this, but any time you want things as you used to have them at home, dear, I can fill every prescription in the pharmacopoeia, and don't you forget it."

And he didn't. That was twenty-three years ago, and not one of the six young Callboards can remember ever to have heard their father so much as refer to the doughnuts his grandmother used to make when a boy.—*American Paper.*

SOCIETY.

THE Duke of Cambridge has promised to be present at the proposed Jubilee Review of Scottish Volunteers in the Queen's Park in June next.

THE death of Lady Alice Peel removes one more of the rapidly-diminishing number of society people who were shining stars long before Queen Victoria ascended the throne. She was the youngest daughter of the first Marquis of Ailes, and would have been eighty-two had she lived until the 2nd of July. She had never enjoyed very good health since the death of her husband, General Peel, in 1879. She died literally of old age, and has left none but pleasant memories behind her. Her husband was a son of the first Sir Robert Peel, and the uncle of the Speaker. Time was when General and Lady Alice Peel collected around them at Marble Hill gatherings as brilliant as those which were the pride of Lady Waldegrave's life at Strawberry Hill, near by.

THERE was a very large gathering at the Powder Magazine, to see the last meet of the Coaching Club, and the well-dressed crowd thronged so thickly along the path right down to the corner, that promenading was a work of considerable difficulty. A double line of carriages stretched almost from the bridge along the whole length of the road, and right round the corner into the Drive. Equestrians were also present in great numbers, and altogether it seemed as if the whole of London had taken advantage of the change of the weather from cloud to sunshine to assemble in the park. The dresses, however, still presented a decidedly wintry appearance. A few gowns of diaphanous materials hinting at the approach of summer were indeed visible, but their fair wearers probably regretted their imprudence or vanity before the morning was half over. Warm fur jackets and boas, heavy Melton coats, tighter covers-coats, and black tight-fitting jackets were the garments which distinctly preponderated among the fair sex, and it was pretty evident that the red hats bonnets which have been so fashionable all through this winter have not yet lost their popularity.

MUCH *en evidence* in the Throne Room, says *Modern Society*, anant the Queen's Drawing Room, was Princess Victoria of Wales, who apparently is to be pushed forward a good deal this season. Her dress of white embroidered satin lined faille was exceedingly rich for a young member of the Marlborough House *mange* to find on her back, and it was tastefully garnished with shaded mauve primulas, and lightened by billows of tulle. It was a far more notable robe than Princess Christian's ivory and gold gown, and was only eclipsed by Princess Beatrice's silver satin brocade, because of the magnificent lace that shrouded the ivory satin of the latter's petticoat.

THE Princess of Wales must write it down on the tablets of her memory that *réséda* and gold colour do not suit her, especially when she is looking far from well. Her velvet and brocade gown trimmed with shaded anemones was a creation of perfect art, but it made our pretty Princess look anything but her best.

HIS Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, as treasurer of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, has fixed Wednesday, June 18, as the Grand Day of Trinity term at the Middle Temple, when the members of the society will celebrate Her Majesty's Jubilee, his Royal Highness presiding in the hall on the occasion. A considerable number of Royal and distinguished guests are expected to be present.

Two portraits of the Prince of Wales are being painted at this moment; one by Frank Hall for the Trinity House, the other by Professor Angeli.

STATISTICS.

THE INCOMES OF PRINCES.—The incomes of the royal families of Europe amount to close upon thirteen millions sterling a year. Germany stands at the head of all European nations in the matter of royal incomes. That empire, with a population of more than forty-five millions, supports twenty-two royal, princely, and ducal families, and the direct cost of their maintenance is £3,300,000. Turkey comes next to Germany in its royal expenditures, the total amount absorbed by the Sultan and his family being about £3,200,000. The imperial family of Russia costs that country £2,450,000, the greater part of which comes in the shape of rents from the crown domains, which consist of more than a million square miles of land, besides gold and silver mines. The Austrian imperial family is tolerably well off, having a revenue of £200,000, all of which comes directly from the public revenue of the country. The British royal family comes next, with a cost to the country of about £900,000. The sum includes the revenue derived from the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, which amounts to about £111,000. Italy pays her royal family £660,000, which is a very large sum in proportion to the means of the country, while Spain disbursts on the same account £400,000. The minor monarchies also pay their royal families very large sums. Belgium pays £133,500 a year to her king, and Portugal, with three-quarters a million less population, pays £127,000. Monarchy costs Sweden and Norway £117,500 annually; Denmark, £62,000; Holland, £63,000; Roumania, £40,800; and Greece, £42,000. Republican France gives her President £36,000, two-thirds of which is in the form of salary, and one-third for household expenses. The Swiss Republic pays its President £600 a year, which is probably the smallest sum that the head of any civilized nation in the world receives. All the expenditures of Switzerland are on a correspondingly low scale. The expenditures of the Confederation do not reach £2,000,000 annually.

GEMS.

THAT which seemeth most casual and subject to fortune, is yet disposed by the ordinance of Heaven.

It is bad reasoning which builds up a theory of life on the narrow ledge of a passing human mood, and fails to take in the whole round of life.

HUMILITY is the first lesson we learn from reflection, and self-distrust the first proof we give of having obtained a knowledge of ourselves.

AGE is not to be feared; the older a good and healthy person grows, the greater becomes his capacity to enjoy the deeper, sweeter, and more noble kinds of happiness which the world affords.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GINGER WINE.—To make ginger wine—say ten gallons—boil three-quarters of a pound of the best white Jamaica ginger in about eight gallons of water. Add the whites of six eggs to a quarter of an ounce of isinglass, fifteen pounds of loaf sugar, and the rinds of six lemons. Boil the compound three-quarters of an hour, and skim it clear. When nearly cold put it into a vessel that will admit of its being drawn off. Let it work with yeast, and in a few days afterwards draw it off into a cask. Then add the juice of the six lemons and two quarts of spirits. In about ten days bung the cask closely, and when thoroughly fine, bottle the wine off. In four months it will be fit to drink.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE BRANDY OF RUSSIA.—The aggregate quantity of spirit consumed by the Russian people is almost beyond belief, though St. Petersburg is not to be compared with Moscow in this very objectionable respect. The chief means of intoxication is the drinking of Vodka, brandy made from grain. The drunken Russian, however, is not as a rule quarrelsome, he only becomes more lovingly demonstrative and foolish. A ludicrous though sad evidence of this peculiarity was observed in front of the Hotel d'Angleterre. A well dressed and intelligent-looking citizen appeared just opposite the principal entrance, took off his hat, and quietly but tenderly apostrophized it, smoothing the crown affectionately, which he petted and kissed. It was then replaced properly upon his head, and the wearer passed on to the next corner, where his chapeau was again made the recipient of his fond caresses and gentle assurances, ending as before with a devoted kiss. This process was repeated several times as he passed along the big square of St. Isaac's, totally indifferent to all observers. Singular to say, this behaviour was the only manifest evidence of the individual's inebriety; but the truth is, our Muscovite was very "much the worse."

A SMOKE-CONSUMER.—A smoke-consuming furnace of peculiar construction has been invented, adapted for locomotive, marine and stationary boilers. Its most essential feature, it appears, is an arch located in the front of the combustion chamber between the fire on the grate and the boiler, and dividing the combustion chamber so as to form a cooking oven in its front half; here the fuel is first fed, and, after being there coked, is forced back upon the rear of the stationary grate, where the process of combustion is completed. The arch is inclined toward the rear, so as to narrow the throat between the coking oven and the rest of the combustion chamber, so confining all the volatile products of combustion as to insure their most thorough utilisation, that no smoke or soot may pass the bridge wall. The arch also prevents cold air from coming in contact with the boiler, when the door is opened for the admission of fuel or otherwise. There is a dumping grate in the rear of the stationary grate, just in front of the bridge wall, which is provided with an operating bar; as the clinkers are crowded to the rear end of the furnace in the regular order of firing, they may thus be readily removed.

Too KIND.—Do not burden your guests with attention. To insist that he whom you delight to honour shall eat twice as much as he wants, and does not know what he prefers to take on his plate; should see things he cares nothing for; drive when he would rather walk; sail when he abhors aquatic sports from the depths of an agonised stomach; that he shall be diverted when he longs to be alone with his own thoughts for one precious half-hour of the twenty-four that makes up his waking day—is benevolent torture. Try to make him happy in his own way—not yours. It is quite as possible to bore him by giving him a surfeit of your society as by allowing him to seek amusement in reading or a solitary ramble in the direction chosen by himself. If he comes to you tired, let him rest. Should he be loquacious, listen while he has his say. So far from considering you stupid because you sit by, attentive and mute while he turns his heart and brain inside out, he will be likely to commend you as the prince of conversationalists. The definition of bore, "One who talks so much of himself that he gives you no chance to talk of yourself," is one of the best things that has been said in this century. See to it that you are the bored, rather than the bore, when the relations are those of host and visitor.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. T. R.—Declined with thanks.
 J. J.—Any of the good dailies.
 PAT.—It entirely depends on the age of the gentleman. He should be over twenty-five.
 AGATHA.—You would be called a fine, handsome girl, we should imagine, from your description.
 MAGGIE C.—You are evidently a tall, well-proportioned girl. We could not recommend anything.
 C. P. W.—1. Christmas Day, 1865, fell on a Monday. There are 670 members of the House of Commons.
 E. G. H.—Generally speaking, an engagement ring is not intended for use as a wedding ring, although there are cases where it has been made to do such double duty.
 C. S.—In telegraphy, as in the majority of other occupations, vacancies nearly always exist for expert operators, while half-skilled and plodding workers abound, and are not wanted at living salaries.
 EVELYN.—1. The name is usually spelt Evelyn and pronounced Eve-lyn. 2. Writing quite good enough, but unformed. Character could hardly be told from it. 3. The larger tress is fawn, the shorter seal-brown.
 LILIA.—Your writing is suitable enough, and your grammar all that can be desired. You have made only one mistake in spelling, and that is rather a catchy word. You might take the post if offered, and do credit to it.
 W. S. P.—He had better marry the one for whom he entertains such feelings of love, and not play the hypocrite with another one. No man of honour will, while engaged to marry, devote his attentions to some other girl.
 TWO TREATS.—1. The *t* is pronounced in *Box March*. 2. It would be between colours; brown or lilac would suit equally well. Charlotte means "strong"; Amy "beloved"; Frances "free"; Alice "a princess"; Eliza "the oath of the Lord."
 G. B.—If the form of the phrase be changed to the objective, we should say, "They praised all the scholars but him," and the completed sentence would be, "but him they did not praise." Whenever you are puzzled as to whether you should use he or him in such a phrase, you can determine the matter by running the sentence out to its full expression.
 C. W. T.—A young lady who cannot tell when a gentleman loves her is not worthy of the attentions paid her, and should be condemned to a life of single-blessedness. Women do not need to be guided by any rules in such cases; their intuitive wisdom always teaches them the exact moment when they have rendered their adorers subject slaves to their will.
 R. V. V.—A metallic appearance may be imparted to figures made of wood or plaster of Paris by first giving them a coat of oil or size-varnish, and when this is nearly dry, applying, with a dabber of cotton or a camel's-hair pencil, any of the metallic bronze powders. The surface, when dry, must be given a coat of copal varnish, which imparts to it a lustrous appearance.
 SOPHIE.—Unless a lady is engaged to marry a gentleman she has no right to expect him to be continually dancing attendance upon her. On the occasion referred to he doubtless discovered that she was jealous, and therefore endeavoured to tease her by appearing to be very attentive to another lady. She should not allow such a trifling affair to lead her into the belief that he does not love her. When he has asked for her hand and become her accepted lover, she can then demand that all promiscuous flirting shall cease.
 D. F.—The very best sealing-wax should be used in taking proof impressions of seals and stamps. It should be melted by the flame of an alcohol-lamp, thus avoiding all tendency to blacken the wax, and carefully worked on the surface to which it is applied until perfectly even. Then the stamp is firmly and evenly pressed into it. When it is desired, a beautiful dead appearance may be given to the impression by dusting the stamp, before using it, with a little finely-powdered colour of the same tint as the wax—thus, powdered vermilion for vermilion sealing-wax.
 C. D. R.—Under ordinary circumstances, clandestine meetings should be frowned down by all well-meaning people, as they generally lead to the most unhappy results. Very often unprincipled persons resort to this means of holding communication with ladies, because they would not be recognized or tolerated in decent society. Our advice to young girls is to shun all advances made by men who, on one plea or another, endeavour to persuade them to meet them in this manner. Boarding-school authorities are always on the alert for these veritable wolves in sheep's clothing, and therefore enact the most stringent rules for the government of their charges in this respect.
 L. H. B.—Behring Strait, a channel connecting the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans between the continents of Asia and America, was discovered by Vitus Behring in 1733. He was a navigator in the Russian service. The strait is frozen over every winter. Captain Cook visited and described the strait in 1778, and later Captain Beechey. Between East Cape in Asia and Cape Prince of Wales on the American side, the strait is only 36 miles long. The depth of water is from 20 to 30 fathoms. It is commonly reckoned about 400 miles long. The Island of St. Lawrence stands opposite the southern opening of the strait. Captain Behring was wrecked in 1741 on a desolate island, where he died.

T. T. THOMPSON—January 9, 1830, fell on a Saturday.
 M. P.—Your writing is plain, and will probably become graceful by practice.

JENNY.—It is best to consult a surgeon on the subject of removing moles. More harm than good is sometimes done by amateurs.

A. D. N.—Pontius Pilate was the Roman officer or ruler of Judea under whom our Saviour suffered. By some writers he is called "governor," and by others "procurator."

C. P. S.—A cement for aquaria is made by mixing three pounds of well-dried venetian red (finely powdered) with one pound of oxide of iron, and adding as much boiling oil as will reduce it to a stiff paste.

LIZBIE.—Oliver Cromwell's father was the younger son of Sir Henry Cromwell, of Hinchbrook, and a substantial country gentleman, not likely to have been a brewer, as some of Oliver's earlier biographers assert.

D. F.—Bay rum, with some quinine dissolved in it, has been strongly recommended. The wash should be used twice a day, and the hair and scalp well cleansed with plenty of soap and water each time just before applying it. Sometimes short-sighted eyes become just right in advanced life, especially if proper glasses have been used, but this fortunate turn cannot be counted upon. Often the short-sightedness increases as the patient grows older.

A LESSON TO LOVERS.

She with a milk-pail on her arm,
 Turns aside with her young cheeks glowing,
 And sees down the lane the slow, dull tread
 Of the drove of cows that are homeward going.

"Bessie," he said—at the sound she turned,
 Her blue eyes full of childish wonder—
 "My mother is feeble, and lame and old—
 I need a wife at my farmhouse yonder."

My heart is lonely; my home is drear;
 I need your presence ever near me;
 Will you be my guardian angel, dear,
 Queen of my household, to guide and cheer me?"

"It has a pleasant sound," she said:
 "A household queen, a guiding spirit,
 To warm your heart and cheer your home,
 And keep the sunshine ever near it."

But I am only a simple child.
 So my mother says in her daily chiding;
 And what must a guarding angel do
 When she first begins her work of guiding?"

"Well, first, my dear Bessie, a smiling face
 Is dearer far than staid beauty.
 And my mother, fretful, lame and old,
 Will require a daughter's loving duty."

You will see to her flannels, drops and tea,
 And talk with her of lungs and liver;
 Give her your cheerful service, dear,
 'The Lord He loveth a cheerful giver.'

G. F.

A. P.—Your sentiments de you credit, and you will do well to adhere to them. It is probable that your father took care to arrange his affairs in such a way that his wife and children in Australia could not be deprived of any portion of his estate. And should you permit yourself to be drawn into a lawsuit in that distant region there is no telling in what expense and annoyance it might involve you.

R. A.—The hygienic treatment known as "Massage Treatment," rubbing or kneading the body is very ancient. The name is derived from the Greek "to knead," and the Arabic "to press softly." The Chinese practised friction, kneading, manipulation, and rolling thousands of years before the Christian era. Rubbing and anointing are parts of this system of hygiene. Plutarch tells that Julius Caesar had himself plucked all over daily to get rid of neuralgia. Diet, bathing, exercise, and friction are usually sufficient to keep one in good health.

C. T. R.—There is no way to make your eyes really larger. You can touch up the eyelashes with *pâte brun* and a camel's-hair brush and put a faint, dark line just under the rim of the lower lid. This is called making up your eyes, but it must be cleverly done to escape detection in daytime. You can darken your brows with the *pâte brun*, which is a dark-brown stub sold in little cakes by beauty artists. Some girls use a pencil, a bit of burnt cork, or a burnt match for the same purpose. Belladonna will dilate the pupil of the eye and make the eye seem larger, darker, and more brilliant, but also it injures the sight.

C. L.—Of course we should know more of this gentleman than you report to enable us to judge of his aims. That he tenderly remembers his wife is a good sign. That he craves upon the sympathy of his friends in such feelings is natural. If he thinks marrying again among the possibilities of his life he may deem this method a good one for showing to female friends what manner of man he is, and possibly for finding out what manner of women they are. There is nothing unmanly or improper in what he has done; and if in all other respects he is a good man you and your sister may safely treat him with confidence.

A. B.—Cork is the bark of a species of oak that grows abundantly in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Algeria, and the south of France. The largest supply comes from Portugal.

E. R.—English letters cannot give the pronunciation of a French word closely enough to make it intelligible to a Frenchman in ordinary conversation. The nearest approximation to the correct pronunciation is: "Jo swee pray."

D. W. T.—A good book, a dozen white pocket-handkerchiefs with his initials on them, by the lady's hand, a pencil, a writing-case, or anything within the line of life to the parties, is proper. He will not raise questions about its fitness.

E. D.—Probably she could, unless you have something from her in writing to show that she refused to let you pay her attention any longer. You have letters to her, with nothing but your unsupported word to offset them, would be apt to win a verdict in her favour.

E. B.—Considering that he had made a full confession and asked your forgiveness, perhaps you were just a little too harsh with him. If he loves only you, as he declared was the case, he will be apt to call and repeat the declaration, and then you can make amends for your harshness.

C. A.—In order to dry a large rose satisfactorily, you should place it between sheets of absorbent botanical paper, which can be obtained at some book shop which deals in botanical text-books. Do not subject your rose to very much pressure. Another way of preserving a rose for some time is to plunge it in paraffin, just warm enough to be fluid.

R. W. B.—The bell is an instrument of great antiquity. According to Plutarch, the tradespeople rang bells in the Athenian market. The Romans used them in the household. They are said to have been first used for churches about A.D. 400, by St. Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, a town in Campania. In England and France they were in use as early as the sixth century.

L. G.—Various meanings are given to the precious stones. According to some authorities a blue sapphire is the emblem of wisdom, and the white and red onyx is the emblem of conjugal happiness. Probably a ring composed of a sapphire, between two onyxes, means that a double portion of happiness in wedlock will result from the exercise of reason and common sense.

T. L. R.—If you can say so with truth, tell the young man that you do not wish to enter into the rather intimate relations known as "keeping company" with any one at present, but do not let him draw you into any rash promise to "keep company" with "him or no one." If you can say nothing better, tell him you like him very well as a friend, but nothing more; if he chooses to be offended, it is not your fault.

A. M.—Your friend is rather cautious, and perhaps was a little alarmed by the manifest interest you showed in his suggestions. Perhaps when he renews the subject he will pursue it to a more satisfactory conclusion if you leave him more to himself. On your side you should remember that you should be more careful in entering into any engagement with a man whose friends are unknown to you than with one who has relations who are known to be respectable and trustworthy people.

E. P. N.—Your private marriage would have no effect upon the widower unless he were informed of it, and that would make it known to the young lady's father and the public generally. Your father-in-law would have just cause for offence if you should surreptitiously marry his daughter, and he might cause her great discomfort during the intervening period, before you would be ready to take her to your own home. The best way would be to wait till you are ready to go into housekeeping, and then be married publicly.

J. C. G.—To allay pain in the feet when caused by fatigue from walking or standing too long, put them as soon as you can into warm salt and water, mixed in the proportion of two large handfuls of salt to a gallon of water. Sea water made warm is still better, if you can conveniently procure it. Keep your feet and ankles in the salt water until it begins to feel cool, rubbing them well with your hands. Then wipe them dry, and rub them long and hard with a coarse thick towel. It is stated that this practice, if persevered in every night, will cure neuralgia or cramps in the feet or ankles.

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